

AMERICA'S MOST AMUSING MAGAZINE

The SMART SET



*A Magazine of
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"Forewarned is Disarmed"

by

CHARLES CALDWELL DOBIE

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AND

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Issued Monthly by Smart Set Company, Inc., Printing Crafts Bldg.
Entered at New York Post Office as second class mail matter

Eltinge F. Warner, Pres. and Treas.

George Jean Nathan, Sec.

Western Advertising Office, Westminster Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

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THE RIGHT RECORD

By Harry Powers Story

THE gaunt, incongruous man in mud-bespattered riding togs knelt beside the little pink-and-white woman on the *chaise longue* and pleaded with her for the love that had once been his.

His handsome face was white and haggard—his black hair streaked with gray at the temples—the flame of admiration was in his eyes.

With all the eloquence of despairing love he pleaded with the woman who held his heart between her slender fingers. She toyed idly with the vagrant folds of foamy tulle about her shoulders—and remained unmoved.

In vain had he bowed before her—in vain the powerful arms which might have crushed her reached out to supplement his impassioned words.

The woman—this woman who bore

his name—was adamant. Dumbly it came to him that all his prayers were futile, useless things.

At last he rose. One chance alone was left to him—Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata"—the song of their trysting days. Perhaps that would bring response.

With rapid steps he strode across the room to the phonograph—then hastened back to her side. His rugged face blanched with suspense as the first strains of the melody floated through the room.

The saccharine notes of "Sweetie" broke the silence.

Good God! He had put on the wrong record!

* * *

A moment later she was in his arms.



TIDINGS

By T. F. Mitchell

HE paced feverishly up and down outside the closed door, just as countless husbands have done and will continue to do. The suspense was terrible. At last, after what seemed an age, the door opened and a smiling, frock-coated gentleman came out.

The husband rushed forward breathlessly with questioning eyes.

"Congratulations, old man," said the frock-coated gentleman. "Absolute decree!"



ROMANCE

By Margaret Lyster

GREEN-GOLD were the trees with laughter
Pale gold, of the early May;
You said: "Let us walk together
On this road for a little way."

The Cross-roads came, and we parted;
For time had not taught us to sigh.
Our days were as coloured and careless
As the wings of the dragon fly.

Pale gold tilts the morning shadow,
Wave-rose are the blossoms bowed.
They say there's love in the forest
And the song of the lark is loud:

But I shall go back in the evening
When the first star of night can be seen
And walk that road as a beggar
That I walked with you as a queen.



FOREWARNED IS DISARMED

By Charles Caldwell Dobie

I

"DAFFODILS—*yellow* daffodils for Miss Merridew, sir? Oh, of course, sir! Just so, sir!"

The heavy bronze door of the Merridew mansion closed slowly, blotting out the obsequious and gravely correct Hobbs. Foster Muridge wheeled about in annoyance and with measured solemnity began to descend the marble stairway.

"Daffodils—*yellow* daffodils for Miss Merridew, sir?" The echo of the butler's polite incredulity still lingered.

"What could the beggar mean?" muttered Muridge. "What color did he expect them to be?"

And suddenly it struck him that Hobbs' sense of propriety had not been outraged by the fact that daffodils were necessarily yellow. No, Hobbs had been inexpressibly shocked to discover that Foster Muridge had committed the indiscretion of fancying that Miss Merridew would be pleased with anything so flamboyantly vulgar as a bouquet of yellow blooms.

Now that he pondered it in the cold light of retrospection, it seemed an impossible flight of fancy to imagine a bowl of yellow daffodils set among the pastel suavities of Clarice Merridew's boudoir. As a matter of fact, he should have chosen roses, pale pink roses, to match equally the faint bloom of his fiancée's cheeks, or the tempered coloring of her silk-screened windows. What had possessed him to sound a note so inexpressibly garish, he asked himself, as he stood, between the marble lions that flanked the stairway, and dreamily drew on his grey suede gloves.

Finding no answer to his question, his flickering annoyance died completely. It was impossible to be ruffled by trifles on such a full-blown Spring day. Indeed, he forgot to feel the slightest disappointment over the fact that Clarice had either ignored or forgotten their appointment for tea. *Tea!* Fancy drinking tea and going through all the boring formalities of a stuffy drawing-room on such a red-lipped April afternoon! This was a day for the open road, the blue sky overhead, the soft thunder of birds in flight. . . . Or, if the thrall of the city still lay upon one, it was a day for flashing crowds and the music of the band swinging up paved streets, the rattle and honk of yellow taxis darting like wasps in the limpid sunlight, wisps of subtle perfumes escaping from webs of finely spun linen masquerading as handkerchiefs, lips, full and colored by design where nature failed, in short a day for pretense, passion—adventure—adventure as sun-soaked and palpitant as the very daffodils that blossomed in every flower-vender's stall.

"Daffodils—*yellow* daffodils for Miss Merridew, sir?" Already he had the explanation. They were the expression of his flaming mood, and if the memory of Clarice grew pallid by contrast the lack was hers.

He was recalled by a voice at his elbow. He looked down. A lean, dashing, swarthy gentleman stood a few steps beneath him, answering the questioning lift of his eyebrows with a sweeping bow.

"Ah, if you will be so good! I am a stranger in San Francisco and the address . . ."

Muridge took the envelope which the stranger held up to him.

The man before him was a rogue, artful, insidious, delightful, but still a rogue. The point of his waxed mustachios proclaimed it, the rakish tilt of his slouch hat echoed it, but it was his tie, spilling over the black surface of a sober waistcoat that set the seal of confirmation, a flowing, insolent, abandoned yellow tie!

Foster Muridge looked down at the address on the envelope. *Miss Clarice Merridew!*

For a moment he was astounded!

It did not seem possible that Clarice could be the recipient of a note from the hands of such an arrantly fascinating knave. If such a thing were possible, what became of the faintly tinted theories which he had been evolving? And to add to his surprise, he noted swiftly the heavy gold crest which ornamented the left-hand corner of the scented missive. Obviously this coat-of-arms was quite too opulent and distinctive to spell anything but social distinction. There was something old-world and baronial and exclusive about it.

"Oh, yes!" he found himself stammering. "Just so! Miss Merridew lives here. If you will allow me I shall see that it is delivered!"

An ugly light gleamed in the stranger's eye.

"Señor, it is not possible! It is for me to deliver."

Foster Muridge stiffened with cool displeasure.

"I shall see that Miss Merridew gets this letter," he answered with irritating finality.

The man before him breathed audibly. "Give it to me—back!" he warned.

Muridge shrugged, eyeing the yellow tie calmly as he slipped the envelope into his pocket. A quick movement on the part of the man before him revealed a knife-blade, but it was sheathed as instantly; only the flash of its owner's cruel smile still warned. But this sinister by-play merely confirmed Mur-

idge in his determination to deliver the letter to Clarice Merridew himself. He was masculine enough to welcome persuasion, but he could not meet compulsion with a smiling countenance.

The swarthy stranger bowed again, this time with insolent exaggeration.

"Whóm," he sneered, "have I the honor of . . ."

"Permit me—my card!" returned Muridge with assumed hateur.

At this moment Muridge's car swung from the opposite corner toward the curb, and Muridge brushed the swarthy messenger from his path and moved forward. A prolonged howl arose, and Muridge was conscious of a futile tug at his coat. He turned. In a flash he saw a nimble hand moving in the direction of the sheathed stiletto. Muridge thrust out his fist and sent his antagonist staggering. Then, with quick decision, he faced about, gained the open door of his touring-car, hopped lightly in and was whirled away.

He looked back. The disconsolate messenger was standing in the center of the street, his hands lifted in mingled appeal and raillery toward heaven. At this distance only the insistent yellow of his tie pricked the blur of vanishing details. Moved from his habitual calm by the pulse-stirring moments that had just passed, Muridge waved an insolent farewell. Then, his spirits flickering down in sudden and inevitable reaction, he sank back in his seat and wondered what it had all been about.

What had urged him to the impertinence of calmly appropriating a note that was not addressed to him? Certainly he had no justification beyond the fact that he was the prospective husband of the lady for whom the letter was intended. And this was slight justification, indeed. No, there was no more excuse for his conduct than there had been for presenting himself at the conservative door of the Merridew mansion with a garish bouquet of yellow flowers. There was no explanation—it was something in the air, a subtle urge of Spring, a leaping-up of banked fires, a sudden desire to dance to the tune of Adventure. The stage

had been set with blue skies and heavy perfumes and flaming April blossoms, and now, tripping from the wings, had come a delightful rogue, in sombre waistcoat and sun-splashed cravat, a crested note in one pocket and a sharpened stiletto in the other. Crested notes, under such circumstances, Muridge told himself, were made to be snatched from the fingers of such provocative messengers. But, having acted out the prologue, he could find no stage directions for the ensuing acts.

He turned his attention to the note he had so impulsively carried away. The elaborate coat-of-arms seemed now rather too familiar to harbor the mystery which he had been hoping for. Where had he seen it before? Almost instantly he remembered. He had noticed it upon the announcements scattered about town of an entertainment which was to take place that evening at the Palace Hotel for the benefit of the Red Cross. A certain Countess Orosi was to be the chief attraction—it appeared that she sang or committed some such folly in the name of charity. Apparently, the coat-of-arms was that of the Countess Orosi and had been used on the announcements as a lure for lovers of titles, as well as the curious.

Muridge had heard of this Countess Orosi. Her appearance upon the social horizon of San Francisco had been very recent, but armed with so effective a weapon as a coat-of-arms she had succeeded in rushing the most exclusive trenches. But over sundry Scotches and soda at various masculine foregatherings Muridge had also remarked the eye-lifting tone that accompanied any reference to this recent social recruit. Really, after everything was said and done, the Countess might be a very fascinating creature, she very probably was, but she was not precisely the sort of companion that one would pick out for one's fiancée. And her choice of messenger was not reassuring. He had no idea what the Countess Orosi had written to Clarice Merri-dew, he had no wish to know, but of

one thing he was positive, he did not approve of the friendship and he would tell Clarice so at the first opportunity.

At this point, he remembered that he had heard also that the Countess Orosi had a brother—a Marquis of Something-or-other. It didn't matter about the title, but the thought of a fortune-hunting Marquis was not a calming interlude in Muridge's growing annoyance. What if this letter to Clarice were written by the Marquis himself and not by his sister?

Muridge looked at the handwriting on the envelope. It was bold and flowing and rather hard to place, a hand that might have belonged to either sex. He gave up in mingled despair and irritation. He didn't approve of either the Countess Orosi, or her titled brother, or Clarice Merri-dew, or even himself.

Suddenly everybody and everything grew tiresome and possession of the note irked him beyond measure. He couldn't read it, he couldn't deliver it to Clarice without a ridiculous explanation, he couldn't fling it in the face of either the Countess or the Marquis as he would have liked—in short, he was in an absurd predicament, and he resented the whole irrational business.

But suddenly a warm breeze from the south curled about him with an insinuating caress. The flare of Spring seized upon him again. He had been longing all day for a dash of adventure in the unseasoned stew of his well-ordered existence, and if a snatched note and a swaggering messenger flavored the dullness only slightly, at least they did their best. And it struck him that the Countess Orosi must be a really very interesting personality! Particularly if she measured up in even a small degree to her swarthy servitor.

Well, there was nothing to prevent him from making her acquaintance. Tonight's concert was open to anybody with a dollar on his person, and he had a notion that the name of Foster Muridge would be equally potent in gaining admittance to the lady's inclusive circle. Of course, he could wait for an introduction, but why delay? In-

troductions were cold and pallid means to equally colorless ends—they suggested the severely correct Clarice, and her severely correct boudoir, in which yellow daffodils found no welcome.

If the note belonged to the Countess Orosi he would return it with as sweeping an apology as he could muster. But if he discovered that the Marquis had written it. . . . Well, that was another matter. After all, Clarice Merridew was his fiancée, and he had some rights, even if he were a mere man, and an American man, at that. Of course, Clarice Merridew's fortune meant nothing to *him*, and yet . . .

"At least," he muttered, "I shan't let any foreign talent walk away with it!"

And, having thus established a rational reason for his interest in both the lady and her brother, he went on calmly piling up a series of irrational plans for accomplishing a thoroughly irrational purpose.

II

LURED by the Countess Orosi's coat-of-arms and the formidable list of patrons, a capacity crowd filled the Rose Room of the Palace Hotel and even spilled out into the lobby. In the hope that most of the concert would be over, Muridge waited until nine-thirty before making his appearance, but as is usual with such affairs, something had caused a delay and he found the first number responding frantically to the applause of an audience bent on getting its money's worth.

He had intended pushing forward to a good vantage-point where he could get an intimate view of the Countess in action, when, to his dismay, whom should he see sitting in one of the improvised boxes but Clarice and her mother. Then, like a dash of cold water, the realization swept him that Mrs. Merridew was one of the distinguished patrons of the entertainment in progress. He felt in his pocket for the note that he had come into such forcible possession of. All the possibilities back of his rather hectic and highly

keyed afternoon fell in as quickly as a badly mixed cake. The Countess Orosi's note, no doubt, had to with this ridiculous and commonplace concert. This explanation took the edge off all his subtle anticipations. Suddenly he lost all interest in the adventure, and looking sharply in the direction of his fiancée's languidly tilted head he felt stirred by a vague rancour. It was just like the Merridews to suck the orange of adventure dry of every possibility! No one could possibly imagine the stolid respectability of his prospective mother-in-law yielding up anything but trivial conventions. And Clarice? Well, youth itself was always full of flaring possibilities, but . . . No, he was quite sure that given the requisite number of years Clarice would repeat with monotonous fidelity all her mother's double-chinned virtues.

He had all but decided to slip out unnoticed and go home, when the memory of the Countess' swarthy servitor pricked his depression like a pocket flashlight. Even the disappearing waistline of an unimaginative dowager and the honeyed smile of her calmly contented daughter could not quite efface the picture of the cavalier rogue whom the Countess Orosi chose as her messenger. He decided to chance further disillusionment, and, falling back in an obscure corner by the door, he stood with folded arms for a glimpse of the Countess Orosi.

The concert was interminable and the audience not to be denied. Encore followed encore. Finally at eleven o'clock a stir among the auditors heralded the number that all had been waiting for, and the Countess Orosi swept upon the platform followed by her accompanist.

Her effect upon the audience was instantaneous. Even the indiscriminating could not escape her personality. It was not her looks, or what she sang, or the quality of her voice that made the impression. But she did things differently; she had poise, understanding, a sense of humor. She sang very simple songs, in French and in German. She sang even in English, which was sur-

prising for an amateur. She "put over" her efforts completely, without acrobatics either physical or vocal, and left the platform with her audience clamoring for an encore, which she had the wit to deny.

Muridge escaped on the crest of a little wave of departing auditors, and stationed himself in the lobby at a point that he felt sure the Countess would pass. She came out almost instantly, quite alone, muffling a flaming red cloak tightly about her neck. At a little distance behind, an attendant, carrying a basket of roses, trotted obsequiously.

Muridge, crossing over, halted her. She looked up at him with a certain incurious boldness, which told him that she was accustomed to being taken by surprise.

"I am Foster Muridge," he said abruptly.

Her quick smile and the gloved hand she offered indicated that she knew his name and the social prestige back of it.

"I have just come from the concert," he was beginning again.

She checked him with a charming grimace. "Wasn't it dreadful? Every time I sing for charity I get my reward. And it's about as flat and unprofitable as virtue's. Please don't compliment me."

Muridge smiled. "I had no such intention. But mayn't I . . ."

"See me to my taxi? . . . I shall be charmed."

He relieved the page of the basket of flowers and followed the Countess through the revolving door to the sidewalk. Already the liveried factotum had scampered before their approach, and Muridge's car swung quickly forward, putting to rout the belated taxi which had answered the Countess' call.

"You may see me home also," she said with a sudden droop of eyes looking sidewise under their curling lashes.

He moved nearer. Her manner was at once candid and illusive, full of the subtle half-tones of sophistication. And for a moment the sparkle of her personality mounted to his senses like heady wine.

"Now—how did you guess what I had been hoping for?" he found himself whispering with an air of languishing melodrama, as he dismissed the taxicab with a curt wave of the hand and swung open the door of his car.

She hesitated as she gathered up her skirts, putting a discreetly revealed foot forward. "How did I guess? Do you imagine I am stupid enough to fancy that you were interested in my singing? And if you merely wished to make my acquaintance no less than twenty people could have given you an introduction. Remember I am at least five years older than I look, which means—"

"That you are still young enough to take a risk."

She looked back at him mockingly. "Women always bear a reputation for safe plays," she laughed.

He bowed her in. He was glad now that he had foresworn a conventional meeting. She had set the music at a sharp pace and Muridge was still keyed to the lure of lively measures, but already he felt a fleeting conviction that she possessed the faculty of playing a tune that one might have difficulty in keeping time to.

III

"AND now, Mr. Muridge," began the Countess, as the car speeded up, "will you be good enough to give me back the note you snatched from my man, Ruiz, this morning?"

Muridge, having looked for a display of conversational fencing, at least a languishing moment or two, was rushed off his feet by this direct attack. He dumbly fumbled in his pocket and handed the note to her.

"Thanks," she said drily. And she tore the letter into fragments and flung it to the breeze. "Now, that's off our minds."

"Our minds?" he echoed with questioning emphasis.

"You forget—I have a brother, the Marquis, you know. Somehow we never feel safe with incriminating

scrawls floating about. Isn't that your experience, my *dear* Mr. Muridge?"

He knew that she was laughing at him, but he was too annoyed to join the merriment. Her cryptic banter almost confirmed the nasty suspicion that the Marquis had written the letter after all. How many such perfumed and crusted notes did the demure Clarice Merriew have in her possession, he found himself demanding? And he had fancied her so wanly conventional, so fastidiously dull!

"You have not yet answered me," the Countess said with the shade of a drawl in her voice and she leaned back in her seat, touching him ever so slightly with an insinuating shoulder.

"I never write incriminating things," he answered stiffly.

"American men never have time to. They are too busy perpetrating them."

"Your man Ruiz is not an American," he retorted significantly.

"No, he's delightfully lacking in judgment. But you must grant that he is picturesque."

"Yes, almost too much so. Indeed, I should think you would find him a bit too temperamental for comfort."

She arranged the folds of her cloak. "Ruiz is the only thing that stands between me and complete ennui. San Francisco is *too* easy. If I didn't have him about I'd feel as if I were robbing the blind. When I get bored I send him out to stir up some excitement."

Muridge stared at her as she continued to smooth the velvet folds of her cloak. She was growing more and more audacious and charming, and he was growing less and less sure of her.

"I take it that you were bored this afternoon, then," he ventured.

"Wasn't I! The Marquis is getting so hopelessly Americanized. Everything reduced to a system. He's had a vertical filing cabinet installed, and a card index, for cataloguing all our prospective victims. It's too prosaic to last. I don't approve of business methods applied to our profession. One might just as well earn one's way in the stock market and steal in respectable fashion

from the rich but dishonest widows and orphans."

Muridge shifted his hat from one knee to another. "And just what did you say your profession is?"

She closed her eyes half way, looking at him with coquettish insolence. "I didn't say. I didn't think I had to. But then I forgot. You are a man, and probably can't get anything but correct answers to your sums. My profession is a good deal like yours, Mr. Muridge. I live on the labor of others. The only difference between us is that I have to use my wits to accomplish it, while you were relieved of that necessity by your grandfather."

He flushed. "Indeed, how interesting! And pray, how do you know that I was relieved of using my wits by my grandfather?"

"Well, Mr. Muridge, granting you have any, the whole history of your grandfather's attempt to deprive you of their use may be found in the Marquis' systematic arrangement of *'Who Might Be in San Francisco.'* The Marquis is a wonder at gathering data, but, of course, there are some things that elude him . . . your wits, for instance. But I think I can complete the record on my return home."

"I fear it will not add greatly to the chronicle," Muridge returned with a feeble attempt at sarcasm.

She allowed the conversation to lapse, and she sat back easily, her hands folded in her lap as she looked serenely out of the window. Her face was turned slightly away, and he took this opportunity to study the profile, especially the piquant tilt to her nose, quite at odds with the Madonna-like arrangement of her dark hair.

His musings were halted by the abrupt stopping of the machine. The chauffeur scrambled down and opened the door.

The Countess Orosi stirred languidly and gave a stifled yawn, as she said to Muridge:

"Well, we've arrived."

Muridge clambered out, and gave the Countess his hand.

"Do come in and meet the Marquis. He will be delighted," she insisted, slipping her arm into his.

A moment before he had almost persuaded himself that he was quite through with an impertinent incident that only the glamour of a perfect Spring day could gild with adventure-some promise. But now, with the hand of the Countess Orosi resting placidly in the crook of his elbow and her hair shaking out little ripples of intriguing perfume, he came to a very different decision.

* * *

As they climbed the long flight of marble steps, he wondered how the Countess had contrived to obtain the Pollard mansion for her sojourn in San Francisco. The Countess, divining his mental question, answered it with uncanny promptness.

"Wasn't I lucky to fall into this?" she queried, sweeping her hand in the direction of the house. "I met May Pollard three years ago when the Marquis and I were traveling from Cairo to Brindisi. We were on the same steamer. She had a very valuable sapphire brooch, a gift from her husband when they were married. Just after she landed in Brindisi she discovered that it had been stolen. The Marquis and I stayed with her all of one day, helping her report the matter to the police. She was so grateful—you can't imagine! And the very first person to look us up when we arrived in San Francisco was May. 'Now, you dear things,' she insisted, there isn't the slightest need of your being cooped up in a stuffy hotel. I'm leaving for Japan next week, and the house is yours.' And so it was settled."

An unpleasant suspicion flashed across Muridge. "And the brooch? Was it recovered?"

The Countess halted their slow ascent, turning to him with a frank laugh. "What a question! Remember, Mr. Muridge, sapphires are my special weakness."

He was too baffled to be displeased, but he matched her insouciance. "So

glad you told me," he drawled, covering his necktie with an instinctive hand. "I have a valuable sapphire pin myself."

"Yes, I have been looking at it for the past fifteen minutes. You see, the Marquis has that indexed."

She stooped over to disentangle her skirt from an incredibly high heel.

"Well," he was beginning tritely, "forewarned—"

"Is *disarmed*," she finished. "That's my motto."

IV

THE stately elegance of the Pollard mansion suggested the usual attendant at the door—calm, dignified, unruffled. But Muridge was not in the least surprised to find the swarthy messenger of the afternoon, Ruiz, doing the honors. The rogue smiled inscrutably upon them both, facing Muridge with a glint of ironic humor in his eye as he relieved the Countess of her cloak.

"Let us go upstairs," said the Countess. "The Marquis has some very good cigars in his workshop. It's the only room in the house that isn't fussy. If I had this house for a year I'd do it over."

Muridge followed.

They found the Marquis, a slim, rather blonde, engaging gentleman, bending over a center table as they entered the room. The lights were too soft to give Muridge more than an indistinct impression of the surroundings, but the litter on the table was unscreened and Muridge caught the twinkling of unset jewels and the flash of gold and silver scraps. The Marquis looked up quickly and let a string of pearls fall carelessly upon the heap of nondescript gems. The Marquis did not attempt to do any of the formal things demanded by the situation. He merely answered the Countess' introduction with a rather patronizing nod as he said:

"My dear Muridge, I'm so glad you ran in. That impossible Ruiz gave you such a character that I'm relieved to find you an ordinary human being."

Muridge was beginning to relish this flippant pair. "If his descriptions are as vivid as his personality, only a superman could hope to measure up to the standard," he replied.

"Come, Carlos," said the Countess briskly, as she drew up three easy chairs about a massive table, "find Mr. Muridge some cigars. I only lured him up here on the promise of a decent smoke. And, remember, both of you, I shan't allow Ruiz to be maligned."

"His personality relieves us of that necessity," replied the Marquis, tossing a box of cigars on the table. "Did the Countess tell you, Muridge, where she picked up this last curiosity of hers?"

"I don't think Mr. Muridge is at all interested," the Countess said decisively, as she waved Muridge to a seat.

Muridge sank into the chair and reached for a cigar. "I'm more than interested, I'm consumed with curiosity."

The Countess extracted a cigarette from her gold case. The Marquis struck a match and held it out to her. She took the proffered light.

"We ran across him in Mexico, two years ago," the Countess began. "He was sitting sprawled out in the sun, against the wall of a crumbling mud-house in one of the by-ways of the City of Mexico. It was an insufferably hot day. I remember it distinctly. I had trotted out in the glare to take a photo of some church. Or was it a shrine, Carlos?"

"It was neither," answered the Marquis as he seated himself opposite Muridge. "You wanted a picture of that handsome scoundrel who had taken it into his head to serenade you only the night before."

"There now, you've spoiled it all!" cried the Countess petulantly. "I wanted to give a dim, religious tone to the narrative."

"Then," retorted the Marquis, "you should have picked out something more convincing than a glaring hot sun and Manuel Riccardo de los Vegas Ruiz."

"Anyway," the Countess went on, "my handsome serenader was to be shot at sunrise. That is, *he was to have*

been shot at sunrise, but of course you know how slow they are in Mexico, so it was eleven o'clock when I arrived on the scene with my camera. My admirer of the previous night was still standing with his face to the wall. I don't know why he was being shot. Nobody knew. I guess he miscalculated on the time scheduled for the next revolution and got caught on the wrong side of the fence."

She halted her narrative long enough to puff daintily at her cigarette, and continued:

"There he stood with his face to the wall. His hands were tied behind him and there didn't seem to be anyone about who cared whether he was shot or not. So I went up to Ruiz and kicked him. Yes, positively, I kicked him. One has to, you know, or one would never rouse anybody. 'Come!' I said to him, in my worst Spanish, 'why does not somebody shoot this man and have done with it?' Ruiz rose and bowed charmingly. 'What! In this heat? Would you make draught animals of us, Señora? But, then, if the Señora wishes—' And he gave a shrug that was more expressive than fifty oaths. 'What have my wishes to do with the matter?' I demanded. 'Everything, Señora,' he replied with the utmost gallantry. And, with that, he whipped out a gun and the thing was done."

"How shocking!" burst out Muridge.

"Not at all," replied the Countess calmly. "Not nearly as shocking as standing from sunrise until noon, with your face to the wall, waiting for someone to come along and shoot you. I could tell you a dozen more shocking tales than this, but I won't."

"She came back to the hotel," interrupted the Marquis, "with this gentleman bandit trailing after her. I could not persuade either one of them that they were not stark, staring mad. This is just the kind of a rogue I've been dreaming about, and he won't be nearly as much trouble as my Japanese poodle," insisted the Countess. And Ruiz replied alike to my entreaties and

threats: "I am the Señora's slave."

The Countess threw Muridge a languorous glance. "You should have seen Ruiz this afternoon when he arrived home from his encounter with you," she went on. "He was so enraged he stuttered. 'Señora,' he yelled, 'a pig of an American has undone me!—a gentleman, if you please, or so they call these luckless sons of perdition in this country! See, here is his card . . . He has taken away the Señora's letter, and struck me, Manuel Riccardo de los Vegas Ruiz, with his fist! With his fist. See, I spit at his memory!'"

"He spat at your memory three times and called upon all the saints to witness the performance," said the Marquis. "Only the Countess succeeded in quieting him. 'Come,' she said, 'leave off this appeal to heaven. The saints have weightier matters on their hands. This pig of an American is a gentleman, and if he does not deliver the note he will return it unopened.'"

The Countess smiled upon Muridge's look of gratification. "Even Carlos refused to believe that you would do what I had said. 'How will he know where to return the note if he does not read it?' he objected. To which I replied: 'You forget the Orosi crest on the envelope.' And I wagered a pair of gloves against a box of cigars."

"And I suppose I lost," muttered the Marquis gloomily.

"Decidedly. I was so sure that I ordered my gloves before hand." Muridge looked at his watch.

"Don't tell me you're going!" she protested. "Why, you haven't seen the Marquis card-index system yet. Come, Carlos, don't sit there pouting just because you lost a wager. Show Mr. Muridge how clever you can be under pressure."

The Marquis rose and shook himself with the air of a collie roused from a warm hearth by his master's prod.

"What does Muridge know about my card-index system, I should like to know?" he muttered sulkily.

"Why, I told him, of course. Do you suppose a woman misses a chance

to brag about the accomplishments of the male members of her family? Indeed not! They're far too few."

"Now, I say, Muridge," sputtered the Marquis, "do you think this quite—well, quite *discreet* of the Countess? Why should we take you into our confidence? I daresay you're a good enough sort, but I must say your conduct of today was disturbing, to say the least. Snatching letters not intended for you is bad manners—distinctly bad manners."

"The Countess is merely living up to her motto, I take it," replied Muridge drily.

"Precisely," she nodded. "I always say: An honest confession is good for another indiscretion. And a little knowledge, you know, Carlos, is a dangerous thing."

"Or as the Countess says," quoted Muridge glibly, "forewarned is disarmed."

The Marquis gave grudging assent to their flippancies as he led the way to the vertical filing-case. It stood in an extreme corner of the room and, before it, was a low table littered with memoranda.

"Now," commanded the Countess, "give your curiosity scope. Mention any name and get a complete account of its past, present and future."

Muridge reflected. "Well, how about my own?"

"That's not curiosity, that's conceit," sniffed the Countess. "Carlos, if we must, we must. Turn up Foster Muridge."

The Marquis consulted his card-index, and, acting on the reference, drew a pocket from the vertical file and read off the following

Muridge, Foster Dillingham.

Parents—Respectable, but unimportant.

Source of Income—Two million dollar estate left by maternal grandfather.

Grandfather's Source—Shrewd business head and plenty of salt in a mine.

Social Position—Never fails to receive an invitation to the leading champagne agents' dinners.

Hobbies—Polo and amateur detective work.

"That last," explained the Countess, "was added late this afternoon."

"Is that all!" cried Muridge with evident disappointment. "I thought you said he had my sapphire pin listed."

"There's a cross reference for that," explained the Marquis. "We've got to look up Mrs. Martha Dillingham Kenwood for that information."

"My aunt!" exclaimed Muridge.

"If you object—" began the Countess.

"What would be the use?" snapped Muridge.

"Kenwood," announced the Marquis, "Martha Dillingham."

Husband—Dead, but provident. (He was the manufacturer of Pollyana's Piquant Pickles.)

Income—Not dazzling, but steady. Pollyana has been crowded a bit by the Fifty-seven Varieties.)

Chief Item of Interest—A fifty thousand dollar sapphire necklace, said to have been presented by the Emperor to Josephine. (Note: Necklaces of this class are as common in America as Mayflower furniture.)

Remarks—Necklace is said to be complete with the exception of pendant, which was reset as a scarf pin for Mrs. Kenwood's nephew, Foster Dillingham Muridge, on the occasion of his twenty-first birthday.

Further Remarks—Mrs. Kenwood is reputed to give interesting dinner parties and to have a good cook. She does not confine herself to guests of society, but goes in for brains occasionally.

Vulnerable Points—Likes to be referred to as an authority on Japanese prints and considers it a compliment to have any one discuss the new spirit in modern fiction with her.

"You seem to have given a lot of attention to Mrs. Kenwood," remarked Muridge, a note of displeasure sharpening his voice.

The Marquis nodded. "Ladies of uncertain age always merit a lot of attention. They usually possess jewels, social information, and good cooks."

"Yes," assented the Countess charmingly, "we've given a lot of attention to Mrs. Kenwood, but so far she doesn't seem to have noticed our existence. Is it true? Does she go in for brains occasionally? Because I was thinking—you see, she's giving a dinner party next week. I heard all about it yesterday. Now that you've met us and dis-

covered how open and above-board we really are, do you fancy it would be impossible to have us included in the festivities?"

"Well . . ." Muridge began to stammer.

The Countess waved him to silence. "Of course," she said with an injured air, "if you don't care to arrange it, why let's say no more about it. But really, Mr. Muridge, I did think *you* would appreciate our frankness. Perhaps you're displeased at the reference to the salted mine and Pollyana's Piquant Pickles. But then, you know, the Marquis must have his little joke, even in a vertical-file. Maybe you fear for that sapphire pin of yours. Candidly I should think you'd be glad to get rid of it!"

Muridge looked down at the sapphire pin. He hated jewelry in general, and this scarf-pin in particular. It was quite too massive and flashing and vulgar, and he only wore it occasionally as a tribute to the ill-advised generosity of his aunt. It surprised him to find the Countess so swift in her intuitions, and her mocking air challenged every dormant indiscretion within him.

"As a matter of fact I would," he retorted, matching her bantering tone, as he drew the pin from his cravat and held it out to her. "Allow me to add another sapphire to your collection!"

The Countess drew back with a gesture of refusal. "My dear Mr. Muridge, what can you think of us? Don't you suppose that we have some standards—the Marquis and I? Did you fancy that I would be unprofessional enough to accept such a favor at your hands?"

"My sister is right," interposed the Marquis. "It is our policy never to accept anything open to our skill."

Muridge stared in speechless admiration at such audacity and calmly returned the pin to its place. The Countess lifted her eyes to him in limpid appeal.

"What about the dinner party?" she urged gently.

Muridge had never seen anyone ca-

pable of such swift and charming transitions and as the Countess stood languishing before him he thought of Clarice Merridew. Clarice was sweet and uncolored and lovely, he could not gainsay that, but there were times . . . a Spring day, for instance. . . . Yes, there was a time for everything, a time for yellow daffodils, and a time for faintly pink rosebuds, a time for vivid sophistication and a time for naïve innocence, a time to be cautious and a time to be recklessly indiscreet. After all, the prospect of this pair at his aunt's dinner-table was too diverting to be denied.

"I'll do my best to secure the invitation," he returned airily. "But on one condition. You must go in for the necklace. That really is my aunt's complete background. You'd rob her of her setting if you took that."

"We never accept conditions of any sort," replied the Marquis. "It's unprofessional."

"And, besides," broke in the Countess, inclining gently toward Muridge, "you wouldn't want us to think that you were afraid of us."

Muridge broke into a hearty laugh. "Afraid, my dear Countess? I should say not! Why, I'll telephone right now if you wish."

"That's more like it!" cried the Marquis. "The Countess and I like our opponents to take a sporting chance."

"The telephone is right over there," the Countess said quickly, as she led Muridge to the jewel-strewn center-table.

Muridge had a flickering hope that his aunt would be out. But it proved otherwise. She was at home and in a complacent mood, and before he quite realized it the Countess Orosi and her brother had been included in the list of guests for the distinguished dinner party.

He rose from the telephone. The Countess was smiling widely up at him.

"Really, I must be going!" he announced decisively. "Your formal invitation will follow in tomorrow's mail."

The Marquis came forward with

Muridge's hat. The Countess gave her guest a pliant hand.

"So glad," she purred at him, "that you decided to present yourself without a stupid introduction. Really, informality is the soul of adventure. And I shall look forward to meeting your aunt. Any woman who can be romantic over a necklace in the face of those piquant pickles must be a dear!"

He reached toward the Marquis for his hat, but at that moment the sudden appearance of Ruiz made all three start instinctively. The debonair rogue had lost all his aggressive nonchalance. His face was pale. He began to stutter.

"Countess! Marquis!" he hissed in a frightened whisper. "The police—they are downstairs!"

V

THE police—they are downstairs!"

The echo of Ruiz's startling words brought Muridge up with a round turn. A moment before he had been enjoying the effrontery of the two self-confessed criminals standing before him, now he felt a shivering sense of guilt in having allowed himself to be entertained out of all caution by their impudent swaggering.

"The police? Impossible!" cried the Countess. She flashed a running look of inquiry at the three men, resting her swift glance upon the Marquis.

He shrugged. And with a languid gesture swept the heap of jewels from the table into Muridge's hat.

This precaution on the Marquis' part came not an instant too soon, for the next moment the bulky presence of two policemen shadowed the threshold.

"Madame," said the stouter of the two, bowing to the Countess, "we have an unpleasant duty to perform. We have a search warrant for a string of pearls worn by a lady named Cortez."

The Countess seemed to rally at once under the force of the blow. She presented a smiling countenance to the pair as she returned boldly:

"Pearls? How ridiculous! I loathe them!"

Muridge continued to stare with hopeless fascination at the Marquis, who calmly transferred the jewel-filled hat to his other hand.

"Mr. Muridge," the Countess began easily, turning a rueful face in his direction, "don't let this annoying affair detain you. We are quite safe in the hands of these gentlemen."

The men blushed with evident pleasure. Muridge felt that the Countess had scored. He murmured a conventional protest and moved toward the door. The policemen stood aside to let him pass. It was the voice of the Marquis that caused him to halt.

"I say, Muridge, are you going without your hat?"

He stared and retraced his steps. The Marquis was holding the hat on a level with its owner's broad shoulders. Muridge gingerly received his loot-filled head covering. For a moment he stood motionless, fascinated by the Marquis' audacity. He had an impulse to fling the contents of his hat in the face of this debonair thief. But at that moment the Countess stepped forward and she gave him two slender fingers with an air of regretful dismissal as she said:

"I almost forgot. Would it be possible to include Mr. Ruiz in the invitation for dinner at your aunt's on Thursday? You see, the Marquis has a midnight engagement and I have no one to see me home. If you will be so good. . . . Thank your aunt in my name. Good night. We will see you on Thursday then."

Muridge shadowed his hat with his arm and left without another word. As he gained the head of the stairs he heard the voice of the stout policeman: "We will search the private safe first, Madame."

He looked down into his hat. The jewels were glimmering insolently up at him even in the cautious light of the hallway, and on the top of these gaudy baubles a string of chaste pearls lay coiled like a white snake.

* * *

Muridge's chauffeur heard him com-

ing down the long flight of marble steps, and stood with one hand upon the door of the car waiting for orders. Muridge hardly knew what to do. Should he climb into the machine and whirl homeward or dismiss the man and walk? His indecision was routed by a voice almost at his ear. He turned and faced Ruiz.

"If you have no objection, Mr. Muridge, I shall ride a few blocks with you," the swarthy rogue said with a malicious smile. "One is always safer at a distance from the police."

Muridge shrugged and let Ruiz precede him. "He means to relieve me of the jewels!" flashed through Muridge's mind.

The chauffeur slammed the door and waited for orders; a puzzled expression showed on his face.

"To the Cliff House!" ordered Muridge sharply.

The man touched his hat and swung to his place at the wheel.

"The Cliff House?" echoed Ruiz. "Capital! His voice dropped to a whisper. "But, my good sir, be very careful of the jewels—be very careful."

Muridge could scarcely restrain himself from shoving Ruiz into the street. But there was a venomous air of assurance about the Mexican that warned Muridge to proceed cautiously. Without replying, he transferred the jewels to the capacious inner pockets of his ulster and settled back in his seat with as nonchalant an air as he could muster. They both fell silent.

The night air had developed a sudden fog that shrouded the hills of the city but as the machine plunged from the Presidio Heights into level by-ways, the atmosphere became clear and cold. They swung into Golden Gate Park and the mists appeared again, coaxed into being by a heavy growth of trees. The pines held the moisture silently, but the eucalyptus trees stirring ever so gently sent miniature showers scattering.

Muridge was at once puzzled and enraged by the presence of his unwelcome companion. Clearly the Mexican had no intention of taking over the embar-

rasing loot which filled Muridge's pockets to bursting. At least he made not the slightest move toward such an end. What, then, did his presence mean? Out of the confusion there was looming an unpleasant feeling that the Marquis had put over an extraordinarily sharp trick in ridding himself of the jewels, particularly the string of pearls. Undoubtedly these pearls were the very gems which the police were searching for. Up to a point the affair was diverting and a slight element of daring gave the affair piquancy. But Muridge was too essentially a man of the ultimate conventions to relish a decided plunge into forbidden waters, and he became more and more disturbed at the thought of having received stolen goods. He had introduced himself to the Countess with the vague hope of some shining adventure and he found now that he had overshot the mark. His first estimate of her was more than confirmed. She not only could play a lively tune, but she could command the dancers.

Even though crowded with the tangible anxiety of coming into possession of stolen jewels, he still had room for irritation at the Marquis' card-index flippancies. If it had not been that his aunt's entire being was centered on her impossible fifty-thousand-dollar necklace, Muridge would have welcomed its theft. The bauble was a nightmare to the whole Dillingham-Muridge clan. Everybody in San Francisco publicly raved over it and everybody laughed in secret. Whenever the opera came to town the newspapers smothered the personality of Mrs. Martha Dillingham Kenwood under a description of "the famous Kenwood Sapphires"; if a distraught reporter ran short of material, he dug up the story of the Kenwood necklace and worked it into a Sunday supplement story; even when a new thief made his appearance the Kenwood jewels were despaired of—in the columns of the daily press. In short, these sapphires had become as dull and uninteresting as the famous Astor pearls. Mrs. Kenwood's version of their acquisition

was a highly colored narrative involving at least three grand-dukes and a spicy court intrigue. But Muridge happened to know the true story—the jewels had been taken by the manufacturer of Pollyana's Piquant Pickles for a debt.

It was bad enough to have his aunt the target of the Marquis' cutting drolleries, but she had earned the public sarcasm. What had he done to merit the ill-natured laughter concerning his sapphire pin? Was it possible for this trinket to become a pocket edition of the necklace and its side-splitting notoriety? In that case he would return the piece of jewelry to his aunt. Yes, he quite made up his mind to this procedure, how or when or with what explanation he did not trouble to determine. If the Countess had only accepted it! After all, how insolent and droll the Marquis and the Countess were! Fancy such nonchalance, such fun-poking effrontery! The Marquis' words came to him. They tickled his sense of humor, so that he found himself smiling at the inscrutable Ruiz, who was lolling back with all the airs of an impoverished grandee. "My sister is right. It is our policy never to accept anything open to our skill." Instinctively Muridge put his hand to his necktie—the scarf-pin was gone!

A moment before he had been planning to get rid of this incubus, now, on finding that he had been relieved of it, he felt a stinging and perverse desire to have it back again. Which one of this trio had done so deft a trick—the Countess, the Marquis, or Ruiz? With one fell swoop he had been robbed of a single jewel and put into possession of two pockets full of gems of doubtful ownership. Could any flaming Spring day have lived more fully up to its mad promise? His musings were brought to an abrupt end by the stopping of the machine. They had arrived at the Cliff House.

* * *

Muridge decided to ignore his companion. He left the automobile and entered the café. Brushing past the

attendant who waited to receive his hat and overcoat, he found a seat in a corner near the window. Almost immediately the orchestra struck up a tune. The dancers, rising with alacrity, began to shuffle to the compelling rhythm. Soon the floor was crowded. In all the room not a half dozen people were left at the tables.

Muridge was about to congratulate himself that even Ruiz's hide was not tough enough to withstand the last gross insult, when the familiar figure loomed up, edging his way politely between the dancers. He smiled benevolently at Muridge as he came up to the table and said:

"You Americans! How quick you are! Indeed, you almost escaped me. Come, if one did not know your race, one would declare that you were not only ill-mannered but downright rude. However—" He finished with a shrug and sat down.

Muridge did nothing to conceal his annoyance. "Mr. Ruiz, do you realize that you are intruding upon my privacy? Perhaps this is the mode in Mexico, but permit me to inform you that in California we order things to the contrary."

Ruiz calmly took out a package of cigarettes and began to make himself quite at home. "Mr. Muridge," he drawled insolently, "if I were not working in the interests of the most beautiful and fascinating woman in the world, I should lose no time— But why indulge in idle fancies? To be brief, I *am* working in the service of such a woman, therefore—" Again he gave an expressive shrug and proceeded to light a cigarette.

Muridge leaned forward. "What is this confounded game anyway? Tell me and be quick about it!"

Ruiz ignored the order for haste, and went on in the most aggravating manner possible, smoking, flicking his cigarette, allowing his attention to be distracted by the dancers. Finally, having brought home to Muridge the fact that he was not to be commanded, he returned:

"When I was a boy, my good sir, an English tutor whom my father had the honor to employ, frequently indulged in fanciful tales. Dios, but he knew all! Perhaps you were fortunate enough to have such a spinner of yarns, too. If so, did you by any chance ever hear the story of the old-man-of-the-sea?"

"Yes," replied Muridge impatiently, "but I fail to see the connection."

Ruiz laid aside his cigarette. "The old-man-of-the-sea, if you remember, was something of a devil—such a devil! And our good friend Sinbad was compassionate and youthful—so compassionate and youthful! He allowed the old man to hop upon his back. I forget how he finally dislodged the shameless old beast, but that does not matter. The point is, my good sir, that for a long season the old man stuck tighter than an enemy. Translate the old-man-of-the-sea in terms of the jewels in your possession, and assign to yourself the character of Sinbad. The parable is complete!"

Muridge stared. "And you . . . what part do you play in this diverting parable?"

"Me? I am merely here to see that you keep the jewels until such time as I receive a signal to the contrary."

"Oh, indeed! How ingenious! And how are you to accomplish this feat, may I ask? You can't watch every move of mine!"

"Pardon me, my good sir, nothing is impossible. I shall not leave your side until I receive the signal of which I speak."

Muridge smiled in sneering incredulity. "My dear Ruiz, really you begin to weary me. Perhaps you have forgotten that San Francisco boasts a police force that is at the service of her citizens. If you annoy me I can call upon them."

Ruiz struck a match. "For two hours, at least, I have been annoying you and you have not yet called for help."

They looked at each other intently and quite suddenly they both burst out

laughing. A waiter hovering near stopped significantly.

"Have a drink?" suggested Muridge.

"Why not several, my good sir?"

"The night is before us," returned Muridge drily.

Ruiz gave the waiter his order.

"Several nights," he corrected.

VI

THEY made a night of it—Muridge and his figurative gaoler. There was not a beach resort from the Cliff House to Ingleside that was denied their presence. Indeed, by the time they arrived at Shorty Roberts' Resort, Muridge's head was spinning, not so much a result of various and sundry exhilarating mixtures, as from the composite effect of rag-time orchestra's pounding rhythm into stolid, unimaginative dancers, going through their paces with an air both dutiful and determined.

Frankly, Muridge was bored. If he had hoped to muddle Ruiz or even thwart that gentleman's plans by prolonged entertainment he was foredoomed to failure. Ruiz, for all his inconsequential manner, had a very definite program; indeed, his program was so definite as to border on simplicity—he had but to stick closely to Muridge and the jewels. At first, this program as announced by Ruiz had seemed to Muridge to be the quintessence of childish silliness. Whoever heard of a man being compelled to keep a handful of loot until self-confessed thieves gave a relief signal. Suppose he, Muridge, were suddenly to toss the jewelry in question into the street? As they rode from the last resort, Muridge put this question to Ruiz.

Ruiz stared at him in amazement. "Do so by all means, my good sir, and see how quickly I will prevent you." And, in further proof of the seriousness of his purpose, Ruiz took a pistol from his hip pocket and nonchalantly polished the mother-of-pearl handle with a slender finger. After that, Muridge began to have a glimmering notion that absurd situations are not neces-

sarily trivial. Here was he, Foster Muridge, one of the socially elect of San Francisco, running about with an unquestionable crook, in possession of a heap of unset jewels, not to mention a string of pearls, and no indication as to when he was to be permitted to rid himself of the incriminating evidence. *Permitted*—that was the word that rankled him! Of course he could hail the first policeman that came into view and deliver both the loot and his swarthy friend into the law's keeping. He was quite sure that the word of Foster Muridge would stand against the first superficial appearance of guilt. He was equally sure that Ruiz would hesitate before indulging in any serious gun-play. But Muridge also knew that the true story would be awkward, and quite ridiculous, and that San Francisco would shake with Homeric laughter forever after at the mere mention of his name. He would be badgered by the daily press, caricatured by his club, and figuratively poked in the ribs by his social set. No, San Francisco took an almost childish delight in laughter and it had the unfailing memory of an *enfant terrible* and something of its cruelty.

Telling the truth was synonymous with publishing the fact that he was a fool, and accepting the situation meant admitting that he was a fool, but confining the knowledge to a select few. It takes courage to confess one's shortcomings to the multitude, and Muridge was intensely human. Perhaps that was why he decided to drift with the tide. And a furtive curiosity as to the trio's next move urged him to prolong the agony. There was still the lure of that impossible -dinner-party at his aunt's. What did the Marquis and Countess hope to gain by being included in the list of those present at one of Mrs. Kenwood's entertainments? Surely they could not be so foolish as to imagine that his aunt, for all the social shortcomings suggested by so plebeian a source of income as Pollyana's Piquant Pickles, would array herself for an informal dinner-party in the famous

sapphires. And it was not possible to fancy that, in these days of safe-deposit vaults, expensive jewels were strewn carelessly about the house for the convenience of thieves possessed of all the social graces. After all, the more he thought the matter over, the more convinced he became that the affair *did* have a humorous side. It is always best to face the inevitable with a smile. If one can laugh *with* the Fates, half the battle is won.

And having come to the genial decision of accepting the situation in a spirit of reckless gaiety, he turned to Ruiz with the most exaggerated and cordial manner as he said:

"I hope, my friend, that you will not deny me the pleasure of making you my guest for the night."

Ruiz threw open his hands in complete surrender.

"You play a charming game, my good sir. . . . I shall be most happy!"

* * *

It was not to be expected that Foster Muridge and his friend, Ruiz, breakfasted at an early hour on the following morning. Indeed, the meal served in Muridge's apartments at the St. Francis was more in the nature of a luncheon. Ruiz was proving a delightful rogue and Muridge found it hard to regret the circumstances that had thrown them together. Ruiz had been everywhere, and while Mexico was his birthplace the world was his adopted country. Quizzed concerning the Cortez pearls, he was as frank as the Countess possibly could have been. It appeared that this trick had been turned in Mexico and that Ruiz had done the actual work. But the trio had thought the episode concluded, they had not looked for the appearance of the Señora Cortez upon the scene of their fresh adventures.

The inevitable morning papers were served with the meal. Ruiz, not being an American, permitted nothing to interfere with his surrender to the flesh-pots. Muridge, true to his nationality, let his coffee cool and his omelet toughen as he fell under the spell of

the news. Devoted as he was to this American morning rite, he opened the newspaper with an unusually eager air. He was not surprised to find the very first page emblazoned with a full-length portrait of the Countess Orosi and a more than full-length account of the Señora Cortez's accusation.

A casual glance at the article alarmed him, but, as he proceeded to read the details, he felt more and more reassured. Instead of the situation assuming serious proportions, it took on an air of comedy, and in every line the Countess scored. Reduced to its essentials, the report branded the Señora's suspicions as a grave mistake, and the warrant to search the Countess' private effects an outrage. The significant fact that Mr. Foster Muridge was calling upon the Countess at the moment when the officers arrived on the scene received casual but effective notice. The article concluded with an eulogy of the Countess' charm and forbearance during the trying ordeal and an expression of regret from the Señora Cortez that a mistaken zeal for the recovery of her pearls had been the occasion of so much annoyance.

In every line Muridge saw the subtle hand of the Countess Orosi. He pictured her in the soft melancholy light of the Pollard reception-room, giving out her interviews with a nice appreciation of just what notes should be struck. She began wistfully, no doubt, continued with an air of detachment and magnanimity, and finished by a breathless rallying of her wit that sent the reporters away chuckling, flattered by her condescension. There were plenty of innocent people who would have so ordered their defense as to have earned a very nasty reputation in spite of their guiltlessness. But the Countess had used a dangerous situation for advancement rather than for retreat. He could see her emerging from the conflict triumphant, with San Francisco clapping its hands in glee at the happy termination. Even the Señora Cortez would be flinging herself into the Countess' arms.

Muridge laid the newspaper aside without comment. He felt the necessity of chuckling himself. He was glad now that he had decided to accept the humorous side of the situation. The spectacle of the Señora Cortez apologizing to her despoiler was as ludicrous as May Pollard throwing open her house to the Countess. Even he was playing the fool to the lady's court scene, but the fact that he consciously had donned the motley gave some distinction to his performance. He was both actor and auditor in the comedy.

Ruiz was too absorbed in a second helping of everything in sight to remark upon Muridge's preoccupation. Indeed, Muridge would have gone on mooning until early afternoon if a knock upon the door had not startled him into activity. A page entered with a letter.

Muridge tore open the envelope and read as follows:

Dear Foster:

I dropped into the hotel this morning purposely to see you, but the clerk says that "you are not in." If he had told me that you "were out" I would have believed him. Now I must be put to the bother of scrawling all I had in mind to say simply because you are lolling about in your room with a pitcher of ice-water in one hand and a burning head in the other.

Don't forget that tomorrow is Thursday and that the dinner-hour is seven. Will you be good enough to go to the safe-deposit vault on your way to my house and get my sapphire necklace? Your delightful friend, the Countess, replied to my formal invitation by 'phone and asked as a special favor to see it. It appears that she and her brother are interested in rare jewels.

Wasn't that story in this morning's paper ridiculous? Isn't it odd, I know the Señora Cortez quite well? We went to school together at the Notre Dame Convent in San Jose. She was the daughter of a wealthy American planter and she made all of us American

girls green with envy at the Frenchness of her wardrobe, which was always bought in Paris. I thought it would be such fun to invite her tomorrow, and I was just racking my brain for an extra man to balance things when the Countess asked me if you had mentioned her friend Mr. Ruiz in your message last night. I immediately included him. Do you know the gentleman? I presume he is charming or the Countess would not waste her time.

Where were you yesterday afternoon? I saw Clarice and her mother having tea with such a distinguished-looking man. Someone said he was a Marquis. Is he the Countess' brother? You had better look sharp. Clarice's eyes were positively dancing. I do believe she is waking up.

*Affectionately your aunt,
Margaret.*

VII

MRS. MARTHA DILLINGHAM KENWOOD's dinner was quite the pleasantest affair of an extremely arid season. Whether the chef, or the carefully selected wines, or the casually selected guests, were responsible for the success of the party was hard to say, but everyone showed surprising wit for so dull an institution as dinner.

Foster Muridge's mood was a mixture of irony, anticipation and curiosity. The irony began with his aunt's arrangement of the guests. She had paired off Clarice Merridew with the Marquis, the Señora Cortez with Ruiz, and intrusted the Countess to his own gallantry. He was finding it difficult to keep in the background his irritation at the Marquis' exaggerated attentions to Clarice, and the self-satisfied assurance of the Countess, who had entertained herself by ignoring him as completely as if he had been her partner for life. Indeed, the Countess was urging all her blandishments on Mrs. Kenwood, much to that lady's delight.

Muridge, thrown on his own resources by the Countess' studied indifference and Clarice's unconcealed interest in the Marquis, paid court to his

vis-a-vis, the Señora Cortez. She proved a monstrosly stout dowager, with an absurd baby face, and enough jewelry to thoroughly discount so trifling a loss as a string of pearls, however magnificent. Ruiz ruffled with fine Castilian importance at her side. It struck Muridge that the situation was emerging from the comedy stage and rapidly bordering on farce. Here was the Señora Cortez simpering down upon the very one who had despoiled her and facing the man who had her pearls in his possession. Not only in his possession, but upon his person—tied up neatly in an artistic package and for a purpose, the thought of which moved Muridge to inward laughter. For he flattered himself that he had learned a trick or two in audacity and surprise since that madcap moment when he had surrendered to the urge of Spring and snatched a crested note from a swarthy messenger.

He remembered now that at that moment he had found the personality of his fiancée a very neutral quantity, but he had to confess that under the spell of the Marquis' sweeping gallantries the lady of his choice was unfolding like a chilled blossom coming suddenly into the sunlight. Could it be possible that Clarice had been bored also? He had apologized for the yellow daffodils to her over the telephone. "Oh," she had purred, "did you send those? . . . No, I didn't think to inquire. It didn't occur to me that you . . . Well, you see, they were so *very* daring . . . Oh, my dear, no, I liked them *awfully*!"

She had not confided in Muridge just whom she had suspected, but as he had hung up the telephone he had muttered: "Of course, she thought that they were from the Marquis!"

Well, he had the Señora's pearls in his pocket and he would show Miss Clarice Merridew that there were other men in the world capable of insolent and arresting audacity.

The thought of the pearls brought his aunt's sapphires to mind. He thrust his hand into the pocket of his dinner-coat and an inaudible sigh of relief es-

caped him. Thank heaven, the sapphires were safe in spite of the fact that he had been in the company of the Countess Orosi all evening! His first impulse had been to ignore his aunt's request and plead that he had forgotten to call at the safe-deposit for the necklace, but in spite of the tricks that the Countess had played upon him, a certain stubborn pride made him desire to throw the gauntlet once again in the lady's face and prove his mettle. Was he to admit his defeat by so childish a subterfuge? He had been waiting with dread to have the Countess request a view of the much-discussed gems. Already he pictured the broad smiles that would travel around the table at the mere mention of the sapphires.

He again felt in his pocket to reassure himself that the jewels were safe. Yes, not only the sapphires, but the pearls, rattled in his grasp. At that moment the Señora Cortez beamed upon him and the Countess turned her attention from Mrs. Kenwood for the first time that evening, as she said sweetly:

"Why, my dear Mr. Muridge, how very fidgety you are this evening! One would almost imagine that you'd lost your reputation and half expected to find it in the pocket of your dinner-coat."

"As a matter of fact, my dear Countess," he returned coldly, "I have merely mislaid it."

"How very careless!" purred the Countess. "Fancy if one were to pick it up and mistake it for one's own!"

The Countess delivered herself of flippancy with such an air of impudence that Muridge could scarcely restrain his impatience to put the plan he had determined upon into immediate action. The Countess was proving more insolent than clever. And her thinly veiled contempt was only confirming him in a decision to take a speedy offensive. The Señora sat opposite—he had her string of pearls! Already his vanity ruffled contentedly at the thought of the cleverness of what he purposed.

Now, with a definite plan of action outlined, his spirit grew bold and he regarded his previous lack of stamina with unqualified wonderment. What had possessed him to allow the Countess to whip him about in any such fashion? From the very first, she had kept him trotting around her figurative circus ring by snapping a whip that he was beginning to suspect was incapable of anything more tangible than a very ominous sound. For at least two days his hospitality, his privacy, his very freedom had been dictated by an opera bouffe villain, who needed only spangled trousers and the clank of spurs to be reduced to the point of absurdity. Clearly, it was time to call a halt and teach the Countess Orosi that there were some lengths which even a bold impudence could not compass.

From this moment on, the dinner dragged interminably. He could scarcely restrain his impatience. Why had his aunt deemed it necessary to provide so many courses and what good reason had the company for all the pointless conversation with which they seasoned the meal? He had never seen any woman eat with quite the frank enjoyment the Señora Cortez brought to the board. Her sweet, vacuous smile was constantly succumbing to the allurements of a well-filled fork. The Countess, on the other hand, ate with charming inconsequence, finding the meal more of a background than an actual performance. As for Ruez and the Marquis, they attacked the food perfunctorily, but the wine with gusto. The rest of the company, having come to the end of a dull but well-fed season, went through the motions of eating rather unenthusiastically, reserving their enjoyment for the bizarre company that Mrs. Kenwood had provided.

Muridge never had seen his aunt so pleased. Long association with the Kenwood sapphires had engendered in her a craving for the spotlight and he knew that she must be sketching with satisfaction the newspaper accounts of her dinner-party. To have drawn under her roof the principals in the week's

dramatic sensation was an achievement that she felt sure would give her first place in the Sunday Supplement.

The waiters were bringing on a *parfait* when Muridge decided to spring his surprise. This was the last formal course, to be followed by coffee and liqueurs in the music-room. He half rose in his seat. A quickened pulse gave him a moment of fluttering embarrassment. He fixed his gaze on the Señora Cortez, and he saw her lips parted in puzzled interest. Even Clarice was beguiled briefly from the Marquis and was allowing a startled and indulgent smile to flash in his direction. He cleared his throat. A sense of the ridiculous halted him. He had an impulse to sit down. Turning sidewise, he caught a glint of ironical amusement darting from the Countess Orosi's eyes. This unconscious challenge rallied his determination. He straightened his shoulders and rested one hand upon the table.

"Señora Cortez," he began, looking straight at the lady, "I have a pleasant surprise for you. If we may believe only half of what we hear you have had the misfortune to lose a very precious trinket."

He stopped.

Looks of astonishment mingled with disapproval were visible on every face except the Countess Orosi's. She was regarding Muridge with an indifference that bordered on sheer insolence.

"It has been my privilege to be asked to deliver a certain package to you," he resumed, "by a person who, for obvious reasons, does not wish to disclose his identity. I have the pleasure of returning to you the Cortez pearls."

In his agitation he did not wait to hand the package to the Señora, but, bending across the table, half-tossed, half-laid it beside her plate. She drew back in some confusion. Then her trembling fingers tore off the outer wrapping and a string of jewels fell upon the table. Smiles of amusement rippled over the company—instead of the Cortez pearls the Kenwood sapphires lay before the Señora.

Muridge flushed with annoyance.

"Forgive my stupidity!" he cried, hastening to correct his error. "I have given you the wrong package."

The Señora put out her hand and Muridge promptly drew the pearls from his pocket. But, as he watched the Señora impatiently opening this second package he felt suddenly absurd. No matter what happened now, his silly mistake had robbed the situation of any dramatic effect. Already he felt sure that the Countess was profiting by the delay to recover from her surprise and shape her next move. But his speculation was cut short by the flashing eyes of the Señora Cortez. She was holding the string of pearls at a scornfully critical distance. Every face at the table was turned expectantly toward her.

"Mr. Muridge," she said, in a voice of singularly cutting distinctness, "permit me to inform you that I resent any such clumsy attempts at a joke."

She turned inclusively toward the other guests.

"These are not the Cortez pearls," she explained wrathfully.

Muridge sat stunned. He was incapable of saying a word. He was fascinated by the lowering displeasure which the Señora threw into her glance. He looked neither to the right nor to the left, and the voice of the Countess breaking the dreadful stillness gave him a feeling of intense relief. Somehow he knew that she was flying to his rescue with her usual dash.

"My dear Señora," the Countess drawled, "our good friend here is the victim of a misunderstanding. Will you be good enough to hand the pearls to me?—they are mine."

VIII

MURIDGE graced the black coffee hour long enough to avoid comment, and then fled without so much as a parting word to his aunt. . . . He was disgusted, chagrined, enraged.

Every move he had made seemed to be turned into a situation of droll entertainment for the Countess and her

associates. This last *faux pas* was the crowning achievement in making him play the court fool to her regal impudence. Whatever possessed him to imagine that the ridiculous string of pearls in his possession belonged to the Señora Cortez? Had he been so callow as to fancy that professional thieves allowed jewels to remain overnight in their original settings? The Cortez pearls had been in the possession of his debonair friends for some weeks and by this time they must have been reposing singly and in devious hiding-places, if not scattered to the four winds of Heaven. After all, a little knowledge *was* a dangerous thing, and forewarned—he finished the Countess' perverted proverb with an impatient shrug.

What did the company at his aunt's dinner-table make of his absurd speech to the Señora Cortez? What did the Señora herself think? And Clarice? . . . The Countess had been discreet enough merely to claim the pearls without troubling to make any explanations, although Muridge was confident that she had a ready tale invented in case of need. It struck him with irony that the Countess reserved her explanation for gullible fools, taking the trouble to forewarn only those whom she was sure could be disarmed.

"Well, thought he, "they all must have fancied that I was drunk."

This was not a pleasing reflection, but it seemed quite the easiest excuse under the circumstances.

As he entered the Post Street entrance of his hotel, at least one thought comforted him. The Countess had got precious little out of her latest adventure except his sapphire pin and entertainment. Whatever design she had had upon his aunt's— He halted in his progress down the hotel corridor, arrested by an unpleasant realization. What had become of the necklace? He remembered distinctly that awkward moment when the Señora Cortez had disclosed the sapphires instead of a string of pearls to the assembled guests. After that, confusion had distracted his attention. Certainly the Señora had not

returned the sapphires to *him*. Could it be possible—

There was only one thing to do. He turned on his heels and hastened back to his aunt's house.

* * *

The Señora Cortez was just leaving as he climbed the steps of the Kenwood mansion. The unmistakable coolness of her farewell nod told Muridge that it was useless to attempt to restore himself to her favor. His aunt was standing in the entrance and she pounced upon him almost ferociously.

"What has become of my necklace?" she demanded.

"What do you suppose has become of it?" he snapped back.

He was sparring for time, but his aunt mistook his irritation for an assurance that the jewels were safe in his possession. She turned to speed another parting guest, and Muridge escaped to the music-room. Clarice was playing a nocturne with exaggerated soulfulness and the remaining company was doing its best not to betray the full measure of its boredom. He discovered the Countess and crossed over to her. She was sitting in a charming attitude of catlike relaxation, idly stroking a fan of peacock feathers. She looked up at him languidly and smiled.

"Back again, Mr. Muridge?" she whispered as he took a seat beside her. "I thought you'd deserted us."

"I came back for my aunt's sapphires," he said, as he looked at her fixedly.

Clarice had finished and a patter of torpid applause greeted her premature bow.

"You are a trifle late," the Countess Orosi replied, dropping her peacock fan caressingly. "The Marquis left with the sapphires only ten minutes ago."

"Madame," began Muridge with an attempt at severity, "this has gone far enough."

"I quite agree with you," yawned the Countess. "I said to Carlos before dinner: 'I don't remember when we've had such a stupid time. Really, this Muridge-Dillingham-Kenwood aggrega-

tion is as easy game as a flock of bilious geese.'"

Muridge concealed the full measure of his anger. "Will you be good enough to refrain from these flippancies?" he requested in a voice modulated but decided. "I have just stated that I consider it time to end this stupid farce. Please tell me when I may look for the return of my aunt's property?"

"That rests with you, Mr. Muridge. When do you wish the necklace returned?"

"Now. At once!"

"Oh, but my dear Mr. Muridge, I can't go running after my brother in a dinner gown and a pair of gilded slippers. Won't tomorrow morning do? Really, Carlos is very careful about such things. As a matter of fact, he will take much better care of your aunt's sapphires than you ever pretended to."

"If he has gone directly home I can 'phone for my machine and set you down in ten minutes," Muridge insisted.

"Why, my dear Mr. Muridge, how ingenious you are! Whoever heard of *any* man going directly home! Besides, the banks are all closed at this hour."

Muridge's quiet triumph began to wilt. "What have the banks to do with the case?" he demanded.

"Why they have everything to do with it," the Countess went on in perfect candor. "You see the Marquis has such strict rules. For instance, he never accepts a check."

"What? You don't mean—you don't imagine for one little moment—"

The Countess Orosi playfully brushed his chin with her fan.

"Tut, tut," she warned. "You didn't suppose we were in business for our health, did you? And, really, we have decided to be reasonable. Now I dare say the Marquis would ask anybody but you every cent of fifty thousand dollars. But then we're so bored and tired of the whole affair that we're ready to close out at a bargain. And you've been so friendly and such a

dear! Carlos wanted to stand out for at least twenty thousand, but I said: 'It's been too easy. Say ten thousand.' So we agreed." The Countess rose. "Now don't decide immediately. Sleep over it. I'll give you until eleven o'clock in the morning. Yes, eleven o'clock will be time enough—the banks open at ten. And don't forget, *mon cher*, get currency—your stupid California gold is quite too bourgeois and inconvenient."

And she swept from the room, leaving Muridge in a puzzled state of admiration and dismay.

IX

To declare that Foster Muridge was ready to comply with the demands of the Countess Orosi at the appointed hour next morning is almost a waste of breath. Of course he had moments of rebellion which the spectre of a side-splitting exposure promptly smothered. He was a man who flattered himself that he had principles, but, somehow, dragging principles in to settle this affair seemed as futile and absurd as trying to tame a wildcat by playing the flute. After everything was said and done, he was sportsman enough to realize that the Kenwood sapphires had been won on a figurative wager. The Countess and the Marquis had not deceived him. They had played with all the cards on the table, and beaten him fairly.

The Marquis arrived promptly at eleven o'clock, and in the presence of Ruiz received a ten-thousand-dollar roll of crisp currency with great pomp and ceremony.

"Be good enough to check me up!" commanded Muridge impatiently.

"My dear Muridge," replied the Marquis stiffly, "I would not be capable of such an affront."

At which all three gentlemen bowed with the gravity of Chinese mandarins, and the Marquis stuffed the uncounted money into his pocket and delivered the famous Kenwood sapphires into Foster Muridge's hands.

"I take it that the incident is closed," Muridge remarked, as he passed a package containing the embarrassing Orosi loot to Ruiz, giving at the same time a pointed look in the direction of the door.

The Marquis and Ruiz bowed again, and began to put on their hats. At the door the Marquis hesitated, advanced, and said with all the dignity of the frog footman in Alice-in-Wonderland:

"From the Countess—a word of farewell."

And he laid a crested note upon the table.

"Farewell?" echoed Muridge, sarcastically. "How touching! Is there any answer?"

"None, I believe," returned the Marquis with the most absurd solemnity, as he left the room in the wake of Ruiz.

Muridge picked up the envelope and turned it over gingerly once or twice before he decided to open it.

When he finally gathered courage to glance through it this is what he read:

"Mon ami Muridge:

Tonight the Marquis and I leave on the Overland Limited for our ancestral home in Syracuse, New York. Ruiz goes with us as far as Chicago, where he will stop off to complete a job which I started even before Pittsburgh became famous.

You do not know what happiness is in store for you! The Marquis, who is an expert on such matters, informs me that the famous Kenwood sapphires are nothing more nor less than cut glass. They are not worth, to use your San Francisco expression, six bits. Think what responsibilities are lifted from your shoulders by this simple announcement! When you finally succeed to these family heirlooms, all you will need to do is to consign them to the garbage can. And break the news gently to your adorable fiancée, Miss Merridew! Sudden joy has been known to kill! Tell her that but for me she would one

*day have had to wear the famous—
But why go on? She will bless my
name forever.*

*Devotedly,
Mary Theresa Kirwin,
Otherwise
The Countess Orosi."*

X

AT one o'clock that afternoon, Foster Muridge, swinging up the marble steps of the Merridew mansion, put the professional calm of Hobbs out of all countenance. It was impossible for that worthy servitor to gaze unmoved upon the basket of bloom which dangled in impudent and harmonious discord from Muridge's ungloved hand. If any color was missing, Hobbs failed to discover it. Yellow daffodils were daring enough in all conscience, but what possible defense could be made for the present chromatic aberration!

As a matter of fact, Muridge himself had a misgiving, as he set the basket upon the gloomy floor of the reception-room and waited for Clarice. In the florist shop, surrounded by sundrenched blossoms, the basket's riotous color had fitted the picture, here it seemed to flaunt a too-saucy air—to be at once frivolous and insistent.

But as he caught a glimpse of Clarice darting swiftly down the stairs to greet him his courage rose again. He had never seen Clarice *dart* before. She was upon him like a Spring shower.

He picked up the basket and held it out to her. She drew back, clasping her hands in exaggerated adoration.

"Fancy!" she gasped. "This—from you!"

"I am afraid," he stammered, "that . . . Perhaps it is a bit too . . . Well, the truth is I don't fancy it will fit your . . ."

"You're very much mistaken! It will fit perfectly. I had my room done over. . . . Bakst effects and all that sort of thing. You see, the Marquis—"

"Well, what about the Marquis?" interrupted Muridge disagreeably.

"Well, he was the greatest help. . . . Didn't you know—he goes in for interior decorating on the side. . . . Not that he needs the money! But he is very fond of interiors . . . likes to place people in the correct setting. And really, he relieved me of—"

"Yes, I can fancy he did."

And suddenly it flashed across Muridge that it would be well for Clarice Merridew to search through her jewel case and make quite sure that . . . But, after all, what did a missing jewel or two matter? Was it not as perfect an April day as any that ever shone upon an accomplished adventure? And had not the performance of the Countess Orosi, and the Marquis, and the inimitable Ruiz, been worth the price? If they had never flashed across his path he would have repented his solitary daffodillian indiscretion and gone on bringing Clarice Merridew faintly pink rosebuds to his dying day.

As it was . . . Well, as a matter of fact, Clarice at that moment was too distractingly charming for anything but a kiss. Therefore, Muridge did not further prolong self-analysis. So why should we?

The End.



A PRETTY ankle is the reason why so many men fall into coal holes.



ON MODERN MORALITY

By Patrick Kearney

THERE was a dancer who, in love with her art, toured the world, studying the pictorial and sculptural masterpieces of all times, learning from this one a fold of drapery, from that a twist of the ankle. . . . She probed into the deepest problems of music, and learned also what there was to be learned of life, in order that in her art she might recreate the joys and sorrows of humanity.

She appeared in all the capitals of Europe, and earned the homage of artists, sovereigns and even the people. It was said of her that she had succeeded in bringing to a beauty-starved world the culture and splendour of ancient Greece.

After several years she decided to return to her own country, to give to her own people the vision which she had given to the rest of humanity.

She was told that her only opportunity for a hearing was to appear for a time in vaudeville. . . . She accepted.

There preceded her on the bill an act called Mifkins and Kiddie. This was a team made up of a fat woman in pink tights, with bleached hair and gold teeth, and a man who earned his living

by being six feet tall and weighing one hundred pounds. The team sang three songs. They were entitled "Why Do They Take the Night Boat to Albany?" "It'll Be a Hot Time for the Old Men When the Young Men Are Away" and "If He Can Fight Like He Can Love, Good Night, Germany."

They also told several jokes, one of which was like this:

"If you don't shut your jaw I'll kick you in the stomach."

"Who do you think you're talking to? Your wife?"

As a finish to their act the man spit tobacco juice into the woman's eye. . . . The audience shrieked with approval, and called them back seven times.

It was the dancer's turn. . . . She danced. . . .

* * *

After her performance the manager of the theater, followed by a committee of citizens, came to her dressing-room and informed her that the exhibition she had just given was subversive of public morals, and that she must put on tights and a wrapper before her next appearance, or be cancelled.



LOVE cometh silently like a thief in the night and departeth with all the taciturnity of a steam calliope.



THE PLEASANT MADNESS OF THE FACULTY

By Vincent Starrett

THE flagrant conduct of the principal and the pretty English teacher could not well have been ignored by the board, and was very properly discouraged. The testimony of children is doubtful at best, however, and while there could be little question that the youngsters had pried upon certain improprieties, the ends of justice were adequately satisfied by a severance of the immediate relations. Roxton was assigned to the parental branch, where his energies might inspire the emulation of the doubtful urchins therein incarcerated, and Miss Claimant was sent to a suburban field.

Gossip about the incident languished after a time, but it might well have given the school a permanent black eye, for it was a brand-new institution for which the citizens of a congested residence section had clamored long. . . . President Glenn, of the school board, frankly, would rather have had it happen in any of a dozen other high schools.

"Delegations of parents howling about contamination of their children's morals!" he complained, in private discourse with his secretary, a young male person of discretion. "And that ass, Roxton, had to open his box of tricks in the new school! It's a reflection on me, Renny, and you can gamble I'll hear about it when I'm up for re-election."

It appeared from Glenn's tone that Roxton's sin was that of being found out.

Of course, the Roxton-Claimant episode claimed ample space in the newspapers, but there was another episode that did not. Not a word about it has

leaked out to this day, and that is an unusual circumstance, too.

It followed rather closely on the Roxton-Claimant affair. Only the fact of a teacher's witnessing the incident saved it from publicity. A child would have blabbed it gleefully all over the premises, and there would have resulted another public investigation that would have definitely pricked the aspirations of Mr. Martin Glenn. . . . In short, another young and not unbeautiful teacher (this time from the algebra department) was discovered in the stalwart embrace of the dignified educator who had succeeded Roxton as head of the faculty.

Oddly enough, they were conducting their affair in the same sheltered nook used for the purpose by its discoverers, the first pair of delinquents. Power of suggestion, perhaps.

The subsequent inquiry was so secret that only the offending couple, the witness, and Glenn himself participated. The latter was furious, naturally, and made some rather offensive remarks. The culprits offered no defense whatever, and the chapter ended when they quietly offered their resignations and dropped from sight with hardly a splash.

Glenn breathed a long sigh of relief when he read the morning papers the day after this session and found no mention of it. Then a cynical smile wreathed his mouth.

"Next!" he observed, in the manner of a barber calling the succeeding patient. He would not have been surprised at the moment to learn that another guilty pair had been apprehended

plighting their troth in the scented silence of the campus at Normal.

As a matter of fact, an entire week floated blissfully away before his unthinking, prophetic utterance bore fruit.

"Ye Gods!" shrieked Martin Glenn, tearing his hair. He may not actually have torn his hair, for he had little enough of it, but he did say "Ye Gods," for that is exactly what he would have said, being a graduate instructor in several dead-and-buried languages.

It was the same school, of course; even the same tryst and about the same hour of day. This time, though, the offenders were an elderly Latin teacher of the feminine gender and a comparatively youthful instructor in the gymnasium. This was quite incredible, and a carnival of apprehension seized the distraught school head. . . . The whole faculty seemed to have been violently moonstruck. Incidentally, it occurred to him, whimsically, in passing, the disparity in the ages of the latest mooners was villainous. Thank heaven, though, the principal was not involved this time. Rafferty, it appeared, was made of sterner stuff. Indeed, he was the witness.

The cold-blooded Rafferty smiled grimly as he told his tale, sparing no detail that would lend colour to the narrative. But in Miss Witherspoon, the Latinist, he had caught a Tartar. The first culprit to talk back, she did so with a spirit that bewildered and shocked her hearers. She concluded:

"Where, Professor Rafferty, were you, Friday afternoon? And with whom?"

Glenn looked quickly at Rafferty and beheld him a broken man. His bold eyes had dropped; his chin whiskers quivered pathetically. Suddenly he threw back his coattail and fumbled in the rear righthand pocket of his trousers . . .

"None of that!" shouted Glenn, who still watched him; but it was only a handkerchief the principal drew. He wiped his eyes with it, and then his spectacles. After which he stowed it away and turned abruptly to Glenn.

"Mr. Glenn," he said soberly, "there's something wrong at the Harden high school. I have no idea what it is, but it is pretty evident from what has happened that there is something amiss."

"I agree with you," remarked Glenn, cynically. "Is this statement offered in reply to Miss Witherspoon's charge? Remember that my private stenographer is recording our proceedings."

"In part," answered Rafferty, "this is my defense. I was a coward at first. I sought to shield myself by testifying against these two. I deserve what has happened. Friday afternoon, as Miss Witherspoon suggests, I was making violent love to a member of the other sex in a corner of the examination hall!"

"A teacher?" queried Glenn hoarsely.

"No!"

The school head looked at the principal sternly.

"Look here, Rafferty," he said, "I don't mean to pry into this little *affaire* of yours to the extent of demanding unnecessary details, but I think you may go a step farther. . . . Was it . . . one of the students?"

"No," retorted Rafferty, with a sardonic smile, "it was the mother of a student, come to see why her daughter did not make better progress in mathematics."

"Ye Gods!" exploded Glenn, and burst suddenly into a shriek of laughter, which he instantly strangled in his throat. "Excuse me," he begged. "Either I'm going mad or the humorous side of this affair is just beginning to appeal to me. It's the maddest thing I ever heard of. The first case might have been anything; the second could be regarded as a coincidence, or as a piece of folly suggested by the first. But we come here today to investigate a third case—which, if I may say so, is the most absurd of the lot—and we discover that a fourth case exists! In the name of glory, what does it mean?"

"I have suggested," observed Rafferty, respectfully, "that there is something wrong at Harden."

"It is very evident!" snapped Glenn.

"Well, I can't discharge teachers by wholesale, although that seems the only cure. Return to your duties and keep perfectly quiet about all that has happened. I shall visit Harden on Monday and endeavor to get to the bottom of this."

"Renny," he said to his secretary, when he had returned to his office, "kindly call up Mr. Roxton at the Parental school, Miss Claimant at Brigham, and the two resigned participants in the second *affaire d'amour*, and ask them to meet me at Harden on Monday afternoon at four-thirty o'clock."

All arrangements having been made, and the hour being advanced, the president of the school board ventured the solace of a cigar and reviewed the entire situation. Occasionally, as he smoked and reviewed, he chuckled mightily.

"I'll be jiggered," grinned Martin Glenn, "if it isn't the most glorious imbroglio on record. Four pairs of 'em! Eight minds with but a single thought: eight hearts that beat as four!"

He chuckled again, for deep down Martin Glenn was an intensely human individual, and quite the last man to fail in appreciation of a really unique passage in life.

"The rascals!" he murmured, incredulously. "But what in the world can have started it?"

II

THE participants in the solemn conclave that assembled in the school on Monday at four-thirty were careful to arrive after the students had departed. The doors were definitely locked. Martin Glenn, accompanied by an extremely pretty stenographer from the central office, came last in a taxicab.

"If I may be permitted to assume a moment's authority," suggested Rafferty, with an air of deprecation, "I will show you the enchanted spot, so to call it, and, if you care to hear it, expound a theory I have formulated."

He led the way quickly to a shadowy corner of the main examination room.

"Please take up your positions about a dozen yards from me," he begged, "and let me call your attention to this picture. It is quite unique, I assure you."

The group looked with surprise at the principal. Glenn shook his head dismally. But they all followed Rafferty's rigid index finger.

"If I mistake not," said the head of the school board, drily, "it is the portrait of a man, done in oil." His rich sarcasm was appreciated by the others.

"True," said Rafferty, serenely, "but your view is imperfect from where you stand at present. If you will now step forward, Mr. Glenn—indeed, all of you—I will explain further."

"What tommyrot is this?" demanded Glenn, uneasily; but he did as requested, taking his stand directly before the painting. The rest of the group ranged itself about him, aglow with curiosity.

The president looked earnestly at the picture. He saw only the painted likeness of an ancient scholar. . . . Florentine, he guessed. . . . with a velvet cap on his head and a merry twinkle in his eyes. He wondered vaguely what Rafferty had up his sleeve and ended by suspecting him of a mild dementia. . . . But the painting certainly was well done. . . . that shrewd, laughing eye. . . . His inclination was to chuckle and he did. . . .

A curious emotion filled him, stealing up from his toes; his head was light, his thoughts frivolous. The perfected chiaroscuro of the picture added strangely to its singular attraction; melting and mysterious shadows through which lights seemed to pass; the color of the face looked as if lighted from within. A mischievous, subtle smile played about the lips. . . . it was the smile of Mona Lisa enhanced to masculine proportions. If there was havoc in the smile of "la Joconde," there was sorcery at least in the twist of this gentleman's crafty mouth. . . .

The school head chuckled again, sinfully appreciative of something he did not understand. . . .

Then, while the others stared in blank

astonishment, President Martin Glenn turned amiably to his pretty stenographer, clipped her roguishly about her slender waist, and imprinted a fervent kiss on her upturned lips.

The pretty stenographer returned the embrace warmly, laying her dark head against his snug, white waistcoat . . .

Simultaneously Mr. Roxton and Miss Claimant gave a second exhibition of affection in shameless fashion; and Miss Witherspoon, with a sigh of elderly satisfaction, dropped into the extended arms of her youthful swain. The young man from the gymnasium smoothed back the gray locks on her brows. Rafferty, with the baleful eye of a mediaeval necromancer, stood back and grinned evilly.

"If you will resume your former places," he urged at length, "I will explain to you a very curious phenomenon."

His voice shattered the illusion. The bewildered Glenn released his partner and staggered to a chair, blushing painfully. With startled eyes and incoherent apologies the others scrambled after him, as if they would leave a community visited of the plague. Glenn raised a haggard face.

"Rafferty," he gasped, "what devil's work is this?"

The principal laughed in cheery fashion.

"Don't be alarmed," he admonished. "It is only the picture. What its fascination is, I don't pretend to know, but there's something in that old scoundrel's eyes. . . . Well, down he comes!"

And he closed his own eyes resolutely, and, stepping forward, dragged the painting from its fastenings, standing it gravely face to the wall.

"*Finis!*" he observed with quiet satisfaction.

"Not quite," shouted Martin Glenn, leaping to his feet with an angry glare. "Smash it, Rafferty! Put your foot through his face——"

The principal interposed his body between the excited man and the object of his wrath.

"No," he warned, "we can't do that. Listen! I've traced the history of this extraordinary painting—the recent history, that is. It was presented to the school, as Roxton will recall, by an old chap over on the boulevard. What was his name?"

"Darlington," said Roxton.

"Yes, Darlington. . . . There is just a suggestion of amorous enchantment in the name. A condition of the gift was that in the event of the school's not caring to keep it, it was to be returned to its donor. The old rascal is somewhat of a collector, and heaven knows what else he has in that private museum of his. . . . This particular specimen of his taste is supposed to be the work of an obscure artist of the Florentine school; probably a pupil and certainly an imitator of Leonardo da Vinci. It is undoubtedly of considerable value; it seems equally certain, although it is a monstrous supposition at this time of day, that it comprehends not a little of mediaeval sorcery. . . . But by the terms of its presentation we can't destroy the thing without calling public attention to this chapter of adventures."

"This is incredible," panted Glenn. "I wouldn't have believed it, if I hadn't, myself——"

He broke off abruptly, with a fresh surge of color in his cheeks, and stole a glance at the pretty stenographer, who immediately dropped her eyes.

"Well, back it goes," he announced, after a pause. "Have the janitor wrap it up, Rafferty—in asbestos—and deliver it in person. Mr. Golden, and you, Miss Lally, will, of course, return to the service at once . . . and pray accept my apologies, all of you. But remember, not a word about any of this! By heaven, I hardly believe it yet!"

But the janitor . . . poor chap! That *did* get into the papers. Newspaper readers may remember what happened to him. He disappeared the following day . . . vanished as completely as a bubble, and the picture with him . . . leaving a wife and four

children to mourn his going. The disappearance at the same time of the old Italian apple woman, who kept a stand at the school corner, was not so prominently remarked, and the clever newspaper men saw no connection between the two incidents . . . but some of us have put two and three together and reached our own evil conclusions!



THE UNITED STATE

By Dennison Varr

SHE was tall, spare, angular, intellectual.

He, on the contrary, was short, pudgy, shrill-voiced, bland of manner and cherubic of smile.

Their marriage was not a happy one for the old, old reason. In a union such as theirs it was inevitable that will-power should predominate, that the stronger partner should cow the weaker. One ruled and the other bowed meekly to the yoke. She trembled at his slightest word.



A NEW YORK SKETCH

By Ludwig Lewisohn

WHEN you and I sit at a cabaret
And watch the powdered skin of the plump girls
Under those blue and red lights glide and sway
Upon their hips or leap in perfumed whirls,

And carefully avoid each other's eyes,
And sip our green Chartreuse—I wonder so
That we don't break this galling net of lies
And decently to a clean freedom go!

It's true that once we saw a luminous
And liquid star over a pearly bay—
What has that star or youth to do with us?
For they, like love, are very far away.

But we are married and the whole world knows,
And you're too proud to break and I too wise,
And so we watch the dancers to the close
And carefully avoid each other's eyes. . . .



ENNUI

By Clark Ashton Smith

IN the alcove whose curtains are cloth-of-gold, and whose pillars are fluted sapphire, reclines the Emperor Seaou-Sin on his couch of ebony set with opals and rubies and cushioned with the furs of unknown and gorgeous beasts. With implacable and weary gaze, from beneath unmoving lids that seem carven of purple-veined onyx, he stares at the crystal windows, giving upon the infinite fiery azures of a tropic sky and sea.

Oppressive as nightmare, a formless, nameless fatigue, heavier than any burden of iron or gold the slaves of the mine must bear, lies forever at his heart. All deliriums of love and wine, the agonizing ecstasy of drugs, even the deepest and the faintest pulse of delight or pain—all are proven, all are futile, for the outworn but insatiate emperor. Even for a new grief, or a subtler pang unfelt before, he thinks, lying on the bed of ebony, that he would gladly give the silver and vermilion of all his mines, with the crowded caskets, the carcanets and crowns, that lie in his most immemorial treasure-vault.

Vainly, with the verse of the most inventive poets, the fanciful purple-threaded fabrics of the subtlest looms, the unfamiliar gems and minerals from the uttermost lands, the pallid leaves and blood-like petals of a rare and venomous blossom—vainly, with all those, and many stranger devices, wilder, more wonderful diversions, the slaves and sultanas have sought to alleviate the iron hours. One by one he has dismissed them with a weary gesture.

And now, in the silence of the heavily-curtained alcove, he lies alone, with

the canker of ennui at his heart, like the undying mordant worm at the heart of the dead.

* * *

At last, from between the curtains at the head of his couch, a dark and slender hand is slowly extended, in its clasp a dagger whose blade reflects the gold of the curtain in a thin and stealthily wavering gleam. Swiftly, in silence, the dagger is poised, then rises and falls like a splinter of lightning. The emperor cries out, as the blade, piercing his loosely folded robe, wounds him slightly in the side.

Instantly the alcove is filled with armed attendants, who seize and drag forth the wound-be assassin—a slave girl, the princess of a conquered people, who has often, but vainly implored her freedom from the emperor. Pale, and panting with terror and rage, she faces Seaou-Sin and the guardsmen, while stories of unimaginable monstrous tortures, of ingenious dooms unnamable, press upon her memory.

But Seaou-Sin, aroused and startled only for the instant, feels again the insuperable weariness, more strong than anger or fear, and delays to give the expected signal of death. And then, momentarily moved, it may be, by some ironical emotion, half-akin to gratitude—gratitude for the brief but diverting danger which has served to alleviate his ennui for a little—he bids them free the princess, while, with a regal courtesy, he places about her throat his own necklace of pearls and emeralds, each of which is the cost of an army.

THE HOMERIC SEX

By Owen Hatteras

THE thing to do was to turn dramatically on one's heel, walk collectedly toward the door, open it, stand for a moment on the threshold and then, with an abrupt gesture, vanish. Vanish out of her life. Leave the creature, round-eyed and staring, in the corner of the room. There would be something powerful and enigmatic about it, done in this manner. It would reflect poise and even a certain nobility. Yes, instead of little school girl romantics, one fine Homeric flourish and—Finis, the comedy is ended!

No doubt she would stretch out her arms and exclaim, "Jim! Jim! Come back!"

But it would be too late. The door would close upon her words. He would not hear her. He would be walking firmly, tragically, down the street. Decidedly, since there was nothing left to quarrel about, nothing remaining to adjust, to debate, to explain . . . since the thing was ended utterly, such a procedure was most becoming. It would leave behind an air of superior strength and courage. It would be bringing the thing to a close on a fine æsthetic note.

Collier strode across the room and looked out of the window. A superfluous act. If he was going he had better go at once, now, without further manœuverings. Why look out of the window? He was expecting nothing. There was nothing he was particularly anxious to see. Then why stand rubbing like an idiot out of the window? Like as not the creature would fancy he was loath to go, loath to tear himself away. And fancying this, she would smile. Was she smiling? It was

like her, dammit, to smile at such a time as this. Yes, undoubtedly she was saying to herself:

"He's just hanging around. He's afraid to go. He's trying to think of something further to say just to give him an excuse for remaining a while longer."

Ah, the insufferable vanity of woman!

Well, he would show her! When he got through staring out of the window at the gloomy, empty street, he would do the dramatic turning on his heel and make for the door with firm, aloof, enigmatic steps. There would be no babblings of farewell, no final mockery of love or even friendship. He would go as if he were leaving a room that was empty. What if he left his pipe behind and had to come back for it? No, the blamed thing was in his pocket. His matches. Yes, there they were. As for tobacco he could buy that at the shop around the corner. And his hat was on the second hook from the top on the hall tree. He had placed it there five minutes ago.

Once started there was no chance of his tripping up on some ludicrous triviality. He would take one more look at the familiar street out of this window. Good Lord! was she too callous to remember the times they had sat with their heads together, staring out of this same window, at these houses? Was there no memory, no bitter laceration in her heart at this moment as he who for five years had been her husband was leaving her, never to return to her, never to stand before her again, never to look out of this window as he had so often done?

Collier's face hardened. His thin lips formed themselves into a disparaging crescent. He turned abruptly. Why harrow himself with such maudlin meditation? Why pick this moment of all moments for the morbid raking of ashes. Amputation was the thing. Zip and away! Slam the door and begone. She would catch a glimpse of him as he passed under the window walking with firm, proud and somewhat indifferent steps, a silent, aloof and enigmatic figure. Indifferent! That was the note, the æsthetic tremulo to cap the discords of the past three months. A sort of proud indifference—the indifference of a man against whose steel-fledged soul agonies beat in vain. He had loved her once. Yes, and why repeat it even to himself? Why not soar above the inevitable banalities of disillusion? The situation was obvious. It had no fine points. It was beneath the contemplation of a thinking man. Such puerile heroics were for the magazines and the movies.

He had loved her once. Good Lord! would the indisputable fact never stop haunting his brain? He still loved her—that is, he still loved the woman he had fancied she was. There, that was better. There was a bit of psychology to such a reflection.

But this creature in the corner of the room! She was a stranger to him, a somewhat vulgar, disagreeable stranger. As for the other—the woman he had married or fancied he was marrying, in short, his ideal—he would take her away with him. He would continue loving her in the abstract, in a sort of poetical way. His ideal had merely shed its misfitting husk. The husk was the creature who sat in the corner. He could well be proudly indifferent to her.

Turning from the window, Collier experienced a rush of words to his tongue. He would plant himself indifferently before her and in weary indifferent words tell her the thing he had just thought out. No. Amputation was better. Women were the devil to argue with or to enlighten. Zip

and away! Slam the door and—finis! He would some time in the future, in the course of some cold financial transaction relating to alimony or something, address her by letter as "My dear Husk." Oh, what a fathomless, boundless, witless blithering dolt he was! "My dear Husk" indeed! Locking his jaws, he controlled a curious desire to laugh.

As he turned, Collier's eyes rested for a moment on the woman who occupied the chair in the corner of the library. His heart became suddenly cold. The desire to laugh vanished. A brief terror twisted his thought. She wasn't smiling. She was sitting sunk low in the large leather chair, her face pale in the gloom, her eyes wide, her features drawn.

Good God! she was suffering. More than he was! He had evidently wronged her a bit in his hatred. She was not too callous for memory. She was remembering. Ah, the things there were to remember! The ghosts that slipped about in the gloomy room—wraiths of joys and intimacies. What a merciless, cold blooded thing divorce was! Parting from the present was simple enough. A vulgar, faithless present; a miserable, perfidious creature who occupied it. But this breaking away from the past, this curious amputation of things which survived only in memory!

It was necessary to say something. He had been looking at her too long to pass on without a word. Why the devil hadn't he done as he intended? Of all the maudlin nincompoops he was fast revealing himself as indisputable chief. What would she think if he did his heel-turning now. That he had gone away with some plea unuttered, some final blurb barely mastered. She would get the insane notion into her perfidious head that he had been on the verge of entreating her to forget everything, that he had parted torn with sorrows. And that would please her; another sop to her insufferable vanity. It would elate her, even as it had pleased and elated him to see her face white and drawn.

And he had no desire to please her.

"I think I'll take a few of my things. Just a few trifles, if you don't mind."

He had spoken. His voice had a cracked sound to it. Why the deuce hadn't he moistened his lips before speaking? His voice wouldn't have sounded so blamed strange then. She made no answer. Good. She was too overcome to answer. Excellent. That being the case he was safe. He would loiter about the room picking up a few things, a few of his favorite books—books they had read together. His picture from the mantel above the fireplace. And a few Kubin prints, two or three. Also he would slip the cigar-lighter she had once bought him for his birthday into his pocket. Considering her condition he was in no danger. A deft, sardonic touch to the thing would in no way enhance the final Homeric flourish.

He was thinking of the cigar lighter. It was a damned, impractical nuisance. It was like her scatter-brained nature to buy him so awful a trinket. It was utterly useless as a lighter of cigars, a fact of which she was, in her typical woman's way, ignorant. Thus it would show her, when he slipped the thing into his pocket, that he was thinking upon selfish and practical things; yes, that he had in mind cigars and a felicitous way of lighting them. He would ostensibly ignore her picture on the library table. He would remain before it for an instant and then, with a shrug of his shoulders, move on.

Standing in front of the rows of book shelves, Collier gazed with unseeing eyes at the volumes. He had arranged to have his share of the books packed and sent to his new address. He had done the same with his clothes and a few pieces of personal furniture. All this he had done so there would be no need of returning, so that when he left this evening he would be leaving for once and all. What a confounded *poseur* he was! Unable to act naturally even in so important a situation as this. Manouvering about like some bilious and melodramatic schoolboy.

She was, no doubt, aware of what he was doing. She was, no doubt, by this time smiling at him, delighting herself with the knowledge of what a sentimental ass he was.

Through the corner of his eyes Collier managed to get a quick glimpse of his wife. She was still his wife . . . in name only, as the fictioneers have it. She would remain his wife for another three days. And then by some peculiarly simple and unbelievable transaction she would cease to be his wife. Until death do us part! Delicious phrase!

She wasn't smiling. Again the coldness and the brief terror visited him. Her eyes, round and staring, had followed his figure. She was absorbing with strange silent intensity his every gesture. She was losing him. How simple to fathom her thoughts, even by that momentary glimpse of her. They had been lovers. They had known each other so long. He had meant so much to her. Yes, she had forgotten Rasmussen, Vincent Rasmussen. What a ridiculous name! She had forgotten him and the present and was remembering only, recalling only things of the past—their past. She was repenting.

Collier smiled with a deliberate grimness. Heigh ho, what a wreck she had made of her life! What an idiot she had been to let herself in for this, to sacrifice herself for this creature Vincent Rasmussen! Good God! Was there no hope?

Collier answered the telepathic query calmly. With a calm, indifferent gesture he reached for one of the volumes—"La Reine Pedauque." He held it so she could catch a glimpse of it. A delicate bit of business this, to impress upon her the man of taste and culture that he was. Let her in this final moment compare him to this Vincent of hers, an abominable, ill-mannered cad.

Opening the volume, Collier stared at the thick yellow page that shone faintly in the gloom. The beginnings of several words danced before him. He studied them carefully. When suf-

ficient time had elapsed to account for the perusal of several sentences, he smiled. Let her see that now, in the moment he was leaving her forever, he was able to appreciate a delicately turned Anatolean sentence.

Tucking the book under his arm, he removed a second from the shelf, Max Beerbohm's essays. He smiled whimsically as he reflected that the man Rasmussen knew as much about Beerbohm as he knew about—the moon. Three books were enough. They would make his point.

"He's going home to read. While I sit here, alone. He hasn't any heart after all. Oh, why doesn't he go away? I can't stand this . . . this torture . . . his smile. . . ."

There was no doubt that she was thinking just that. A warmth pervaded Collier. He had suffered. He remembered unwillingly the day three months ago when he had first discovered the existence of the man, Rasmussen, the night she had confessed. Of all the idiotic performances he had ever been guilty of in his miserable idiotic life, that was the worst. He had behaved like a melodramatic boor. Where in God's name had his dignity been? How in Hades had he been capable of such pleadings, such entreaties, such tears?

Yes, he had wept. That was the worst thing about it. If he had only realized the situation in full that night and acted as he was acting now—proudly indifferent, superior, instead of gasping and groveling about. What pathetic depths man could attain. The warmth left him during these meditations and he forgot to open the third book. He tucked it under his arm with a vicious thrust. There was in his ears the cool, maddening sound of his wife's voice—the voice she had used that night. He was always calling it "that night." What a puerile, contemptible phrase, a thing reminiscent of green moving pictures.

" . . . I can't help it, Jim. It's impossible to make you understand. But where is your sense of dignity

and your reason. Use some psychology if you have nothing else. Vincent attracted me. He's different. I couldn't resist it. And, to be frank with you, I didn't want to. Yes. It's all true. Every word you say. What are you going to do about it? Dash about like this, whining? Yes, I love you. Yes, I love Vincent too, but in a different way. I know you've been faithful to me. What has that got to do with anything? I'm not accusing you of anything. Oh, so you were doing it merely to please me? I understand rather that your fidelity was a natural and indissoluble part of your love. No, I have nothing to say. Please go away. I'm sorry it happened. I'm sorrier you found out. But had you paid a little more attention to me instead of running off to your clubs and your silly architects' conventions, it might have been different. . . ."

And so forth.

The sound of it all was in his ears now. In what inexplicable burst of idiocy had he managed to memorize the thing? And would he never give over repeating it to himself? Why the devil hadn't he turned on his heel as he intended to do in the first place, instead of dawdling about picking up books? He'd have been gone by this time. Well, he would go now. He had managed to play the ass for another and last time.

. . . And she had vowed so often that she loved him and only him, and would, could never love anyone else. What good thinking of that now? His thoughts for the past three months had consisted of that same fruitless meditation. Was he going to break down after all and blubber all over the place? Give her the final, sweet satisfaction of seeing him again as he had been that night? Of all the half-witted, addle-headed, worthless idiots, he was unquestionably the king.

A curiously compelling sorrow weighted his heart. His mouth felt chilled. If only it hadn't happened!

There was a brilliant, scintillating idea! To live now without her. Never to speak to her again, never to see her eyes light as he came upon her, never to love her or to feel her kisses! Why pretend about it? Why pose? There was in him an unbearable misery, an uncontrollable desire to weep, to fling himself impotently at her feet. . . . It was too late for that. To turn back were impossible. He could only go forward. His throat tightened. The grief in him pressed for outlet. Tears blinded him. He stood for moments, lonely, desperate, frightened. A sound recalled him to his senses. For a horrible instant he thought it came from himself. He listened, holding his breath. No, it was Helen. She was crying. Her head had fallen forward and she was sobbing into her hands.

II

COLLIER straightened on his feet. A quick, subtle smile passed over his lips. Her sobs were like caresses. They soothed him. They lulled the pain in his thought, dispelled the ache in his heart. He walked to the library table. He would take her picture and not his own. She would see him taking it, watch him through tear-drenched eyes. She would always remember him as she had seen him last, ignoring her but removing her photograph from its frame, gazing at it for a moment and then thrusting it into his pocket. She would understand. It was the woman he had loved, still loved that he was taking away. The other—the husk—he was leaving her where she had fallen. She would never fail to weep when she recalled this moment. And he would leave his own photograph with her. It would be a barb in her vision, this tangible memory of him, keen-faced, clear-eyed, familiar featured.

His eyes cautiously watching her, Collier fumbled with the picture frame. She was staring open-mouthed at him, her shoulders bobbing, faint little sounds passing her lips.

With a sense of triumph Collier removed the photograph. He held it up and looked at it. It flattered her. She had never been so beautiful as this, except perhaps when she was rigged up in her party clothes. That was the way this creature Vincent had seen her—at her best. No doubt he had told her how beautiful she was. No doubt he had. . . .

Collier's fingers tightened on the pasteboard. He had perhaps done wrong in not following his first primitive instincts in the matter and murdering the fellow. He folded the photograph carefully and thrust it into his pocket. It was better that he hadn't done the murder. He was free now of her, of him. At thirty-four there were other things to life than memories. Thank God he had caught himself in time! No woman was worthy the commission of murder, least of all this husk in the corner.

Turning toward her he remained staring at her bowed figure. She was weeping into her hands again. The picture incident had done the trick. He was master of himself after all. A delicious mastery, this, to stand by and listen to her weeping. It was his triumph. It soothed the memory of "that night." It was the way he had dreamed the thing might be. If she would throw out her arms to him now and in her agony murmur his name. Then he could do the turning on his heel and the vanishing.

He found himself staring suddenly into her eyes. It was necessary to say something. He did not, however, forget to moisten his lips. His voice sounded more natural this time.

"Where's that cigar-lighter?" he asked.

He knew it was on the mantel. Despite himself he turned and stared at it. Did she know he knew? She gazed at him stupidly, desperately.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "There it is."

He was getting on famously. If he only remembered always to moisten his

lips before speaking the thing would come off beautifully.

He reached forward and possessed himself of the cigar-lighter, sardonic reminder of the creature's general incompetence. No doubt she was remembering the day she had presented it to him, with twenty-eight kisses for his birthday. There was nothing else to take. He didn't want to look like a moving van. It was therefore time to turn on his heel, to walk toward the door, to open it, to stand poised on the threshold for a moment, and then to vanish. Into the night. Forever.

Why was he continually meditating in such melodramatic terms? Into the night forever, indeed. He might as well start announcing, "Ladies and gentlemen, tomorrow night we present that matchless drama, 'East Lynne.'"

Well, he must be going. That was better, less stilted, more dignified. He must be going—a simple, natural and concise sentence worthy of the occasion. He turned on his heel. With calm, grave steps he moved across the room. Good-bye, room. Good-bye Helen. Good-bye everything. What a topsy-turvy thing life was, anyway. Good-bye chair.

He was on the threshold, the just celebrated threshold of drama. He would turn now for one last look. Or was it better merely to keep on going? He knew what she was doing—weeping with her hands over her face. If he turned now she was likely to look up at him. In which case should he smile, just a trifle bitterly? No, better to stare blankly.

He turned. Her face remained in her hands. Why the devil didn't she look up and have it over with? He couldn't wait there all night. He found himself to his surprise about to speak. Insane thoughts ravished his reason, impossible, horrifying thoughts. He was almost calling her name, almost crying out things which were rioting miserably. . . . His voice choked and he saved himself in time. A decidedly close call. As he was clearing his throat she

looked up. A dizziness overcame Collier. His thoughts swam about. He found himself bowing with an insane politeness, as if he were asking someone for the pleasure of a dance. He noted that her face glistened in the dark with tears—tears of misery and repentance.

III

He opened the door and was gone. Thank God, he had effected it in the manner of an amputation. He had forgotten the gesture, but the thing had come off excellently as it was. Nothing better could have been desired.

He had left her weeping, heart broken. And she would remember him as he had stood before her, removing her picture from its frame. A symbol—the frame . . . or the picture. She would recall him as he had stood smiling over the books. Perhaps she would open the window and cry out after him. She might write him a letter or telegraph. He wouldn't be surprised to find a message waiting for him when he reached the club. If her grief was something greater than she could bear . . . ah, well. He mustn't feel too sorry for her.

What had happened was inevitable. What she felt now because of it was inevitable. His fingers sought the folded photograph in his pocket. The door of the apartment lobby closed behind him. Should he let her see him looking at the picture as he passed under the window? She might misinterpret it. No, he had better let well enough alone. He walked slowly. Let her look at him, let her see him walking slowly, quietly, Homerically out of her life.

He hadn't intended to, but his eyes betrayed him. They traveled to the window of what had been his home. An old habit, a habit of five years. The window was empty. A coldness wrapt itself about him. She hadn't remained to watch him pass on. He quickened his steps. Suddenly he remembered. It was an old habit of hers. To throw herself on the bed and weep.

That was where she had gone—into the bedroom. She was weeping on the bed—their bed in the dark of the room. He would take a taxi at the corner. Had he left his pipe behind? No, the damn thing was in his pocket.

With a sense of comparative peace, Collier stood at the lighted corner. The wounds he had suffered seemed for the moment entirely healed. What queer, weak creatures women were, after all!

He drew forth his pipe and essayed lighting it. It was empty. He smiled. Yes, he was a bit nervous. But he had left her weeping in the dark of the room. He had done the thing with a flourish. Zip and away!

He left the curb and resumed his walking in a direction removed from his club. He had forgotten the taxi. He walked, turning over in his thought each little gesture, each little incident of the minutes in the room. They were a solace to the ache in him.

"I showed her!" he murmured over and over to himself and vanished down a strange street.

IV

THE outer door finally slammed. He was gone. Poor Jim! He had almost broken her heart hanging about,

pawing over the books, confiscating that impossible cigar-lighter as though he would ever use it. And her picture! Poor Jim! If he only weren't such a fool. Well, thank Heaven, the thing was over.

With a sigh Helen Collier rose from the large leather chair. She dabbed at her eyes as she walked through the library into her bedroom. How funny he had looked standing like a little boy before the book-cases! Oh, if only he wasn't such an idiot! In the bed-room, Helen switched on the light and seated herself before the mirror of her dressing-table. She stared at herself wistfully for a number of moments and then with a business-like gesture uncovered the chased glass jar containing the pink face powder.

A few minutes later she was speaking into the telephone.

"Yes, Vincent," she said, "he's gone. And I'm so lonely. The house is empty. Do come over. At once. You should have seen him, poor boy. But I'm really glad it's over. Vincent, dearest, bring that photograph of mine I gave you last summer. The profile one. It's my favorite you know. He took the thing out of the frame with him, poor boy. And I haven't another. Yes. Be sure and bring it. And, Vincent . . . hurry up."



ONE of the pleasantest things about marriage is the chance it offers to ponder over the happy days before.



ALL gall is still divided into three parts, owned respectively by maids, matrons and widows.



WOMAN is at the bottom of everything, save, perhaps, the well of Truth.

PATERNITY

By May Cerf

THEY sat in a remote corner of the Elizabethan Room. He, famous writer of a thousand yarns; she, the editress of a vapid society column. He, relaxed after hours of mental travail; she, vibrant, palpitant, eager to impress her mentality and personality upon the greater genius of the man.

He leaned toward her.

"I am so weary," he murmured. "I wish a good woman would take me in her arms and pet me as if I were a little boy."

The maternal in her became dominant. She took a cushion from a day-enport and deftly placed it behind his head. With gentle stroke she smoothed his brow.

She thrilled. Here was the superman

—a genius with a simple, boyish, monogamous nature.

Beneath the gentle stroke of her fingers he grew reminiscent. A deep, brooding loneliness filled his eyes.

"How I wish I were in New York with my four babies!" he sighed.

"I love babies," she answered. "They are so sweet, so soft, so cuddling."

"Mine certainly are," he responded.

"They make me regret I am not married," she said dreamily.

"They make me regret I *am* married," he answered. "One is in the chorus of the Follies, one sells parasols at Wanamaker's, one works in a Fifth Avenue candy shop, and the fourth is my stenographer."



PRAYER

By Leslie Nelson Jennings

PAGAN, perhaps, and unregenerate,
Denying the refuge of the faith you hold
More dear than life; unhavened, stubborn-souled,
Believer in no kinder God than Fate—
Well, have me so. Yet I am given to see,
Beyond the tumult and perpetual feud
Of the heart's questing, one clear certitude
Of Beauty, clothed in high tranquillity.

And is this less than what all hope conceives?
Let the world crash to ruin, filmed in flame!
I have found heaven tangled in your hair;
Your lips a blessed sacrament that leaves
No doubt within me! . . . Though I name no Name,
My least unspoken thought of you is prayer.

THE BOMBSHELL

By Hugh Kahler

I

ELMER BIXBY was in New York on business so entirely in order that even Grimfield would have approved of it, had Grimfield guessed that Elmer's semi-annual trip had any other motive than a plunge in the abysmal wickedness of the city. Lacking this information, Grimfield compressed its lips and wagged its head and resigned Elmer Bixby once more to the burnings from which he refused to be plucked.

Grimfield was becoming reconciled to Elmer's smoky future, beginning, indeed, to regard him as an institution. He was no longer the theme of fervent and public prayer; the hardness of his heart and the blindness of his eyes had ceased to be matters for earnest intercession with aggravated divinity. No deputations visited him to expostulate and reason and implore. If Elmer desired argument it was necessary to seek it; he was no longer bearded in his den by lay missionaries or professional savers of souls. He had lapsed from an issue into a tradition. Grimfield's attitude toward Elmer was very similar to its position regarding Pharaoh, Judas, Captain Kidd and Benedict Arnold. He was an evil man and there was nothing to be done about it—even by Grimfield.

This should have pleased Elmer. In the early days, when Grimfield had been vitally and actively concerned with his spiritual condition, his persistent refrain had been that he desired only to be let alone; he stood ready to concede Grimfield's right to its righteousness, and demanded in return only his own prerogative of voluntary damna-

tion. This, he maintained sourly, was a square deal to which people who prided themselves on their honesty ought to be eager to assent. He pointed out, too, that if Grimfield's motives were above reproach, if Grimfield was honestly eager to save souls for salvation's sake, there were plenty of other sinners in sight.

There was Hank Griggs, who was a known bootlegger, for instance, and who, in the teeth of the bone-dry law, contrived to present himself to the Grimfield eye in a nearly continuous state of saturation. There was Alphonse Latower, who shamelessly plowed and sowed and harvested on the Sabbath; there was Hub Macklin, who had spent a term in the County Jail and bade fair to invite another by reason of his attitude toward poultry and fruit and vegetables belonging to others. There was, too, Andrew Freeman, who operated the institution described in sermon idiom as "the billiard-hell," where more than one pair of tender feet made their first acquaintance with the slope that leads to destruction.

Why shouldn't Grimfield turn its attention to these obvious and abandoned rascals, instead of concentrating its fire on Elmer Bixby, who was, at least, properly industrious, honest, decent in dress and deportment?

He answered his own question with malevolent frankness: Elmer Bixby had money. That explained everything. They wanted him to help pay for the new roof on the church and the minister's salary; they wanted his house for "sociables"; they were after his pocketbook more than his soul. There

was enough truth in the charge to lend it effective sharpness; more than one earnest apostle winced visibly as the thrust went home. It did not avail to explain that Elmer Bixby sprang from pious stock; it did not answer the shot to point out that his money and name and position lent prominence to his views which justified the effort to overcome them. And Elmer's shrewd use of the retort led, gradually, to the abandonment of the campaign. Not even the granite soul of Miss Patience Hayward was proof against Elmer's insinuation that her proselyting endeavors sprang from a secondary and personal motive.

Grimfield, in short, got used to Elmer and lost interest in him. He became part of the place, like the W. C. T. U. horse-trough and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument. It was possible to do business with him, Grimfield discovered, notwithstanding his wickedness. He could be trusted; he was no sharper than his neighbors and no less acute; his sins were, after all, unobtrusive. Grimfield accepted him at his own valuation and let him alone.

If Elmer chose to drive his little car past church just as the congregation were emerging, he no longer invited horrified expostulations. If Elmer persisted in voting the Democratic ticket, he did not call down on his head the shocked entreaties of decent Republicans. If Elmer was known to consume red liquor, in defiance of law and virtue, no white-ribboned brigade appeared to implore and rebuke. In short, nobody in Grimfield started anything with Elmer. If he wanted a debate he must take the initiative himself. He felt that this involved a sacrifice of dignity, but his craving for battle drove him to it, at last. He sank to buttonholing Mr. Meigs, the Methodist minister, in the post-office, to challenge him with the zoological discrepancy between the diameter of a whale's gullet and the history of a traveler named Jonah; he cornered Joel Hickson in the grocery and bitterly attacked the doctrine of protection, without any provocation on

Joel's part. He inserted an advertisement in the *Grimfield Weekly Gazette* affirming the doctrine of personal liberty as opposed to the sacred order of prohibition.

For a time these unworthy expedients served. Mr. Meigs was betrayed into defense of his position, to the edification of an interested group in the post-office; Joel Hickson recited the sanctity of protection at some length and with a dangerous redness of face; the W. C. T. U. replied (in gratis space) to the heresy of Elmer's personal-liberty theory. But again familiarity bred contempt. There came a time when Mr. Meigs would refuse to be prodded into argument; when Elmer might grow red-faced himself on free trade without any answer except incredulous laughter; when the mention of his name at a temperance meeting was greeted with a general smile. And Elmer retreated bitterly into himself, a little puzzled, a very great deal annoyed. There was no pleasure in his depravity; he had no thrilling consciousness of combat. He settled down to business, and made money.

This gave him a certain satisfaction. That the richest man in Grimfield should be conspicuously wicked was, to be sure, a cunning thrust at the cause of piety. He built himself an imposing house on the hill which overlooked the green, a monument to the rewards of wickedness which no observer could fail to notice. He bought a needlessly costly car and drove it at a higher speed than his natural timidity enjoyed; he dressed as well as his natural conservatism in such matters would let him, and, in winter, his fur-collared overcoat stirred envious comment even among the elect. He spoke, when occasion offered, of plays witnessed in New York, of dinners and wines and excursions.

But there was no joy in it all. Grimfield was used to him; he was unquestionably devoted to damnation, but usage will rob even a circus parade of its novelty, and a sinner is less spectacular than the most moral elephant

that ever refused an empty nutshell.

So Elmer lived with his thoughts and grew in bitterness toward Grimfield. He would have loved to corrupt the town had he been sufficiently uninformed of its rock-ribbed virtue to harbor hopes of accomplishing anything so epic. He did, in fact, make certain cautious essays in this direction, inviting the Fire Company to hold its annual supper in the new house and shamelessly providing beer; his next invitation was rejected by a vote of thirty-six (married) to three (two single, one widower), and the Harmony Hose supped, as before, under the auspices of the W. C. T. U.

II

IN New York Elmer was even less contented than at Grimfield. At home he had always the knowledge that he was a bad, bad man to comfort him. In New York he had his moments of doubt concerning his wickedness. Here, at the best of it, he was certainly not a champion among sinners. He might have followed the example of many a merry-making "man-about-town" to be observed in painting Broadway as vermilion as possible, except that Elmer lacked the courage of his convictions. He was afraid to venture on the domains of sin because he knew that he could not cope with the rightful residents of the district. He would be robbed, probably; he might even be murdered. Worse, he might seem funny. It was the last terror that restrained him. He would never have gone to Rosenbibber's if business had not taken him there; not even business would have overcome his self-distrust if he had not had the chaperonage of one to the very manner born.

It came about very naturally, however. Elmer's usual visits to New York were selling trips. He visited the wholesalers who bought the product of his mill and chaffered solemnly over prices and terms and deliveries. When these had been arranged Elmer would shake hands and return to his hotel—a sober-

ly respectable place in West Twenty-third Street, to which his father had introduced him twenty-five years earlier, and where Elmer felt almost at home. Hence, when night fell, Elmer departed to an orchestra seat at some giddy musical comedy, which he watched with wistful imaginings and from which, when the curtain fell, he would go back to the hotel, ring for ice-water and go to bed. This was the normal course of events. On this occasion Elmer departed from the routine by unwarily visiting the office of a machinery agent who desired vehemently to sell him certain newly improved Jacquard looms, and who had visited Grimfield on that errand on more than one occasion.

Mr. H. Seymour Carroll had genius, of a sort. In Grimfield, after failing to interest Elmer in the new Jacquards, he had made inquiries and noted the results on a compact index-card, for future guidance. Elmer would have been pleased and annoyed to know what that card testified regarding him. It would have pleased him to be referred to as a "hot sport," no doubt. It would have humiliated him to discover that in Mr. H. Seymour Carroll's estimate he was "easy pickings if we get him stewed."

Mr. Carroll greeted him with a low purr of joy when he crossed the threshold of the office, and, in one deft motion, succeeded in closing his desk, seizing a very snappy felt hat and a still snappier stick, shaking hands earnestly with Elmer Bixby and clapping him resoundingly on the shoulder.

It was well on in the afternoon, but in Grimfield Elmer would have remained at his desk for at least three hours more. It thrilled him to hear Mr. Carroll informing a very trim stenographer that he was through for the day; it delighted him to be advised by the same gentleman that the lid was off and the sky was the limit and that anybody who even thought about business would be penalized by the price of the next round.

"That—that sounds good to me," said Elmer tremulously.

Something told him right here that he was about to see life at close quarters and with complete safety. Mr. Carroll grasped his arm above the elbow and piloted him briskly toward the elevator.

Events transpired with a breathless rapidity, concerning which Elmer was never wholly enlightened. His memories, afterward, dated from the moment at which he was casually presented to Miss Gertrude Winston in a palm-lined, soft-carpeted ante-room beyond which he could see thousands of white tables and hear a blurred uproar of jazz music, clinking china and glass and silver, laughter and speech. It was like the lifting of a curtain as the play begins.

Elmer caught his breath with a long, quivering gasp of fearful delight. Miss Winston was not only beautiful, one glance at her informed Elmer that she was even wickeder than he. The smile she tossed at him as she nodded quickly and carelessly across Mr. Carroll's introductory hand-wave, was at once challenging and alluring. There was a hint of drollery in it, as if Miss Winston had a mildly amusing jest to share with Mr. Bixby. Elmer admitted, in a rather unsteady voice, that he was pleased to meet Miss Winston.

"Then that makes it unanimous, doesn't it?" Miss Winston had very white teeth, remarkably sharp.

She seemed to draw Elmer into her train as the quartette moved into the main dining-room, where a gratified *maitre d'hôtel* sprang agilely before them with an unmistakable welcome in every flexure of his supple form.

Elmer found himself, presently, seated beside her at a table so small and so close to its neighbors that only by sitting very erect and keeping his feet rigidly under his chair could he manage to avoid intruding on the limited space already occupied by Miss Winston's minute pumps and those of a colorless and negligible lady in whom Mr. Carroll was intently interested.

"Like this sort of thing, Mr. Bixby?" Miss Winston waved a casual hand to include the room and the people and the noise.

Her voice had a sort of lazy drawl in it which Elmer found immensely stimulating. He found wit enough to say, breathlessly, that it all depended on the company.

Miss Winston was not offended at his daring. He wondered, for a moment, whether she might not have failed to catch the point, but decided not to elucidate it. The discovery that both Miss Winston and the other lady had no prejudice against cocktails exhilarated him to the point of lifting his own glass gallantly in pledge to her. She crinkled her eyes at him merrily and drank with a satisfaction which thrilled him more than ever.

Curiously enough the bibulous habit of the other lady made no impression on Elmer. It seemed natural enough for her to consume the cocktail and the stuffed olive; for Miss Winston to do the same thing impressed Elmer Bixby as a fascinating exhibition of charming deviltry.

His interest was presently heightened by a minor incident. A passing waiter, scuttling sidewise between tables, contrived to catch his foot in Miss Winston's dress. He did not tear it, but the lady evidently fancied that he had, for she stooped and lifted the hem for a careful inspection, expressing her annoyance in a musical but quite distinct damn. She said it so easily and casually that Elmer's pulses quickened their pace. There was no doubt at all that this beautiful woman was as wicked as he was—even wickeder, perhaps. When she accepted one of Carroll's cigarettes and smoked it with practised carelessness, his mind no longer harbored the slightest shadow of skepticism. He did not talk much; it was hard to find anything to say, and Miss Winston seemed not to expect him to do his share of the conversation. She ate and drank cheerfully and contributed a running comment on the people who came and went, the other places

like this one, the theaters. Too, she questioned Mr. Bixby about his home, and extracted from him a very fair picture of Grimfield, snuggling in the green leafage of its elms in the sheltering bend of the hills, its white houses as spotless and gleaming as the icing of a bride's cake.

"Sounds rather quiet," she commented, "but I suppose it's a change after this sort of thing. I've always wanted to try living in a town like that—just to see what it was like. I've read about them, of course, but I never saw one except through a car window. It must be kind of fun to know everybody and have everybody watching you—"

Elmer checked himself on the brink of bitterness. There was no sense in knocking Grimfield, he told himself. If she liked the idea of a town like that it might be just as well to let her cling to her delusions.

Already a mad, fantastic dream was taking vague shape in Elmer's mind. It was absolutely crazy to think of it, of course, and yet—he scrutinized Miss Winston carefully as she consumed part of a complicated frozen dessert. She was young; she knew how to dress and how to fix her hair; she was clever and entertaining; she certainly sympathized with Elmer's views on religion and behavior. Stranger things had happened . . . he had a sudden vision of her in his dining-room, sitting at the spidery old mahogany table and lifting her glass with that mischievous, elfin crinkle in her eyes . . . it would make a difference in Grimfield if a woman like this lived there. . . .

"It is fun, in a way," said Elmer cunningly. "I hope you'll see Grimfield some day. I shouldn't wonder if you like it."

And he went on to describe more of it, perceiving that he was interesting her in earnest as he elaborated on the picture.

It was natural enough to descant on his own part and place in the scene; he couldn't help referring to his mill as the principal local industry;

his house came in for casual mention here and there.

Miss Winston's eyes grew thoughtful and he fancied he caught a hint of wistfulness in them, sometimes. He warmed to his subject. She interrupted him, occasionally, with a sensible question. Several times, too, she turned to Carroll for confirmation of a point. Carroll, who understood the practical psychology of salesmanship to the ultimate comma, responded with frank statement setting forth Mr. Bixby's local prominence more eloquently than Elmer could gracefully have put it.

"It certainly sounds good to Gertie," confessed Miss Winston as they rose. "I'd like to try living in a place like that—honestly. It would be a sort of change after the white lights."

Mr. Carroll greeted this sally with a covert glance of approval, which Elmer intercepted and interpreted. He realized that he must be on guard or Carroll would hornswoggle him into buying those new-fangled Jacquards after all. And, for a moment, his suspicions regarding Miss Winston's sincerity were stirred. She was a friend of Carroll's, sufficiently intimate to be invited on short notice to help him entertain a visiting customer. It was quite possible that she was merely pretending to be interested in Grimfield as one means of helping Carroll's game. Elmer Bixby's canny vigilance woke and stood guard. He couldn't be caught with any such chaff.

They went to a theater. It provided a spectacle remarkable chiefly for the degree of its economy in the matter of costumes and a kind of runway reaching from the stage out through the orchestra, over which, at intervals during the performance, the hard-working members of the chorus skipped and cavorted gleefully in the very midst of the gratified audience. Elmer had been here before, but never in the company of ladies, and his ears burned a little at the embarrassing situation in which he was placed. He did not venture to look at Miss Winston as the feet of the

chorus twinkled about his impassive face.

"Old stuff, isn't it?" said the lady languidly, repressing a charming yawn. "It's about time they called it in. What did you say was the name of that river?"

"Oh, the Wampscogg?" Elmer brightened in his relief. "It's not much of a river—just a crick, really."

"Wampscogg—Wampscogg—" she repeated the name softly. "And it runs right past your house?"

"Yes—my garden backs up on it, and I keep a rowboat there," Elmer admitted. "It's right pretty in spots."

"I'd like to see it, some time," she said.

It seemed to Elmer as if she were talking more to herself than to him. Twice, during the performance, he heard her murmuring the alluring name of the creek. It seemed to fascinate her. She was pensive during a little supper after the play. When they delivered her at the door of a trim-looking apartment house she returned the timid pressure of Elmer's hand with a warmth which delighted him.

"Good night, Mr. Bixby. Come to see me when you're in town again and bring me some pictures of that river, will you? I've always wanted to have a private river in my back yard."

"I—I'm staying over a few days," quavered Elmer. "May I come tomorrow?"

She nodded. "Yes—do. You've got me interested in Grimfield. I like to hear about that place. It sounds good to Gertie."

III

BIXBY managed to be rid of Carrol without resorting to actual violence, and spent a blissful half-hour in roseate visions before climbing into bed.

Two distinct prospects allured him: the more immediate was Gertrude Winston herself. The lesser, but perhaps the more insidious, was the thought of introducing her into unprepared and unsuspecting Grimfield, an animate in-

fernal machine, a bomb against which the community would be helpless. Against the mere personal attraction Elmer Bixby's natural shrewdness might have armored him; he was old enough to distrust his own emotions and he had, besides, a good business man's distaste for indefinite and unlimited obligations. He was drawn by the woman's indolent charm, but not sufficiently to undo the teachings of a lifetime. A more alluring woman than Gertrude Winston would have found it impossible to ensnare Elmer's canny steps.

But the idea of confronting Grimfield with a wife, outwardly charming, who smoked and drank and, on occasion, could swear in exactly the most effectively bored tone imaginable, was horribly tempting. Not even Grimfield could ignore a woman who affronted its sacred conventions as thoroughly as Gertrude Winston would assuredly affront them.

He told her a great deal about Grimfield when he called on her in her flat next evening. She had something to do in one of the stores—she did not discuss it with him, but he gathered that it was a fairly responsible position. At all events it paid her enough to cover admirable dressing and a comfortable and cheerful little apartment. She mixed him a cocktail and provided a cigarette. Thus stimulated he enlarged on his earlier depositions of Grimfield and its charms. She listened wistfully.

"It must be heavenly up there," she sighed. "The noise and crowds and hustle get on your nerves down here. I'm tired of it. Some day, when I've saved enough, I'm going to pick out a place like that and bury myself in it clear up to my ears."

Elmer managed to restrain his ardor just in time. He knew exactly what he wanted, but he wasn't going to be rash about it. There was no hurry. But he permitted himself to suggest such minor concessions as Elmer instead of Mr. Bixby, and Gertrude instead of Miss Winston. Also, being gratified in

these respects, he begged a photograph which caught his eye strongly, and which, under entreaty, was autographed with a dashing "Elmer from Gert" across the bottom of the print. Also, at last, he promised to come back within a month, although his invariable rule had kept his New York excursions six months apart. He went back to Grimfield with a sense of folly doing battle with a persistent conviction that he had laid firm hands on happiness.

Gertrude would make a wife of whom any citizen of Grimfield might be proud. She had beauty and poise; she knew how to dress and how to talk; she was certainly as well educated as Elmer himself. He realized for the first time in his life that the basic difficulty was loneliness; if he had congenial company Grimfield wouldn't matter. A wife like Gertrude, who shared his likes and dislikes, who enjoyed mild excursions into sin for their own sake, who wouldn't dream of wanting to go to church or to turn his lawns into trampled scenes of strawberry-orgies; a woman who would enjoy living in Grimfield and mitigate his own solitudes—with such a comrade he would be happy. And there was always the joyful prospect of smashing Grimfield's narrow little prejudices far more effectively than a mere man could do it.

The very thought of exhibiting Gertrude in the act of compounding a cocktail or consuming a cigarette tempted Elmer hideously. He spent a wretched ten days before he made up his mind. The redeeming feature of the period was furnished by the expression with which Hitty Pickham surveyed him after the inscribed photograph made its shameless appearance on his dresser. Elmer did not refer to the matter, and Hitty conspicuously forbore to mention it, but her lips compressed themselves in such patent disapproval of these unseasonable wild oats that Elmer was more desperately drawn to the idea than ever.

He went back to the cheerful little apartment with a collection of picture

postcards exhibiting Grimfield in all its most favoring aspects. And he took with him, also, the firm determination to ask Gertrude Winston to marry him and come home to Grimfield to live. But he kept his intentions to himself until cautious consultation with H. Seymour Carroll had enlightened him rather thoroughly regarding Miss Winston's history. There was nothing very dreadful about it, to be sure, although Grimfield would scarcely have taken that view of the matter. Elmer found it rather disappointingly innocent, after having wrestled with certain inbred scruples and overcoming them nobly.

He laid his proposition before the lady bluntly but with a certain rugged earnestness that sat well on him. She did not yield too readily, and this pleased him. He did not want an easy triumph. He was almost in love, as nearly so, indeed, as it would ever be possible for him to come. He wanted Gertrude for her own sake almost as much as he wanted her for the sake of shaking Grimfield to its moral and social underpinnings. She begged a day to cogitate. Elmer consented willingly. That was the right way to look at a matter so important, he told her, and, with a not displeasing sense of suspense, took his departure to wait for the verdict. He got it next evening without even suspecting that H. Seymour Carroll had been cross-examined in the meantime concerning the financial and social status in Grimfield of Elmer Bixby.

"I'm going to do it, Elmer," announced Miss Winston flatly. "I don't say I'm actually mad about you, but I like you better than anybody else that ever wanted me to marry him, and I'm so tired of living here, in this racket and bang and glare, that maybe I'm letting that influence me. You'll have to be sort of patient with me at first."

Elmer kissed her. It was a remarkable experience. Something seemed to well up in his being and flood his soul with a gentle, pervading glow. She patted his cheek softly.

"You're a good old scout, Elmer,"

she whispered. "Maybe I'm going to like you a whole lot, after all."

Elmer kissed her again.

IV

THEY were married the next day, and Elmer, in the flush of something utterly foreign to his nature, forgot about the mill long enough to spend a week in a completely idyllic blur of happiness. He would have prolonged that stay at the rose-covered little hotel overlooking the Sound, but Gertrude was restless. She wanted to go home, she told him. He took her to Grimfield by the night train, and it was the middle of the morning when he helped her down from the accommodation at the little station which was the only thing in Grimfield that did not fairly glisten with white paint. She drew a long, deep breath of sheer joy.

"It's just what I hoped for," she told him.

Elmer beckoned to the single cabman present, old Hector Beggs, and helped his wife into the dejected ruin which Hec persisted in calling a bus. He saw that Hec was stupefied, and inwardly exulted in the thought that within an hour Grimfield would hear the tale. It was to provide Hector with more detail that he turned the six trunk checks over to him instead of arranging for the transfer of the luggage himself. Gertrude adored the house from her first glimpse of it. Not even Hitty Pickham's vinegar mouth could dampen her delight in the big, sunny rooms, the mellowed carpets and wall paper, the old mahogany and the silver that had come over from England with Elmer's sixth grandfather. She took him down to the river, holding his hand like a gleeful child. She made him row her a hundred yards up the stream before she would consent to come back to the house.

"I'm not going to touch a thing," she declared. "It's simply perfect as it is. Elmer, I'd have never forgiven you if I'd missed this." And in plain sight of the utterly scandalized Hitty she kissed

him smartly on each cheek and then full on the lips.

"And he stood there looking like the cat that ate the canary," declared Hitty in subsequent reports of the affair. "You never see such a change in a body. I hardly know him, the way he acts about her."

But Hitty's chronicle of what transpired at dinner was less sympathetic.

"She mixed up the drinks her own self," declared the truthful woman. "And she and Elmer set there and swallered the stuff as ef 'twas lemonade. And that ain't the worst of it, neither. She smokes. I've seen her—twice. Cigarettes! And her clothes! Land o' love! I helped her unpack, and such heathenish things I never hoped to lay eyes on in my born days!"

It was Hitty, too, who bore witness to more than one damn, escaped in the course of a struggle with a refractory wardrobe trunk. Grimfield stood afar off and gazed on the Bixby house with the eyes of Lot turned upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And Elmer Bixby, confronted by the shocked countenances of his fellow-citizens, knew that he had builded better than he knew.

Grimfield was flattered—silenced, beaten to its quivering knees. Elmer's eye brightened and his head was high. He went reluctantly to the mill in the morning, hurried home at noon and dallied until Gertrude had to drive him back to his work. In the evenings he rowed her slowly along the Wampscogg or took her out into the country in the little car; she taught him to play double-Canfield and picquet; she returned from Portland with a tremendous quantity of sprightly phonograph records and sheet music. She played the piano rather nicely and sang in a thin, true voice with a clever trick of expression that fascinated Elmer. He would have been happy with her on the most solitary of desert islands. In Grimfield, confronted constantly by the shocked faces of his neighbors, he basked in the warmth of their disapproval like a cat on the hearthrug.

Gertrude was contented, too, at first.

The country was a new experience; there were thrills in the freshness of the milk and the yellowness of the cream and butter; Elmer's ability to distinguish at a glance between hundreds of trees and plants impressed her as remarkable. But it did not last.

"Elmer," she said suddenly, as he swallowed his cocktail one evening in early September, "why doesn't anybody come to see me? I've been here over a month, and nobody's been to call yet. What's the matter?"

"They don't approve of me," said Elmer calmly. "They think I'm a terrible sinner. And you're worse, of course, because you're a woman."

"You mean they won't have anything to do with us because—because—"

"Because we drink and smoke and play cards and swear and go driving on Sunday and stay away from church and prayer-meeting—that's the way they're built. You can't help it, Gertrude. You can't change them."

"Can't I?" Gertrude's chin protruded a little. "We're the richest people in town, aren't we?"

"That doesn't matter in Grimfield. They don't approve of being rich, very much."

"You wait and see," said Mrs. Bixby. "I'll show them."

V

ELMER chuckled inwardly. If Gertrude was going to challenge Grimfield there would be feathers in the air. He scented the smoke of battle, and it was good to his nostrils. He held his peace while his wife prepared for war. He offered no protest when she ordered engraved cards announcing the fact that she was at home and mailed them to a list of Grimfield's elect censored by Hitty Pickham. He made a point of being at home himself on the first Thursday afternoon.

In a way it was something of a triumph for Gertrude. Almost every able-bodied woman in Grimfield was there, and if there was a perceptible constraint in the atmosphere it was gratifying

rather than otherwise, for Grimfield was nervous and Gertrude at her ease, gracious, slightly condescending, conscious of the smartness of her dress and the advantages of her position.

The talk was innocuous at first, turning harmlessly on Grimfield's climate and scenery, for which Mrs. Bixby expressed a decided favor which should have been highly complimentary to its older residents. Tea was served on a three-wheeled wagon, and tongues loosened a little under its influence. Only when Gertrude provided Elmer with a cocktail instead of a cup, and joined him in the act of drinking it, was there any hint of unpleasantness. Mrs. Dobie rose stiffly and made a formal exit, followed by her two daughters and the interested eyes of all present; little Mrs. Meigs fluttered away, nervously; Mrs. Hickson, who believed in shaming the devil as thoroughly as possible, declared her position without finesse; she did not hold with wine-bibbing, she announced, and her departure inspired four other ladies to emulation. The rest faded away almost before Gertrude's amazement had given way to smiling composure. She faced her husband with a dangerous glint in her eye.

"Don't you dare to say it, Elmer! I know what you're thinking. The cats! In my own house! I'll show them!"

"Go as far as you like, dear," said the delighted Elmer. "You've given them the worst shock of their lives. Do it again!"

"I'll show them!" repeated Gertrude Bixby, between her teeth. "I'll have them eating out of my hand in a month. You'll see!"

Rumors of battle reached Elmer thereafter. At first Gertrude's confidence was unshakable; she was positive about the outcome. But gradually she stopped talking about it. She did not tell Elmer about meeting Mrs. Hickson in the post-office and cutting her; she did not repeat Mrs. Dobie's excuses when invited to dine at the Bixby table; she did not confess that even funny, fluttering Mrs. Meigs had managed to

decline a pressing invitation to drive down to Portland in the Bixby car.

Elmer observed that she was thoughtful, silent, even depressed. He missed their comfortable good times and tried to hearten her by expressing his fixed opinions of Grimfield and its conventions.

"What do you care for them, Gertrude? They're narrow-minded prigs and Pharisees, every one of them. Don't you fret over this thing—let 'em alone. We've got the best of it—"

"I'll show them," she would always answer, stubbornly. "I'm going to have them following me around like a flock of hens. You'll see if I don't!"

But Grimfield refused to follow. Elmer watched one Waterloo succeed another as Gertrude battered fruitlessly at the town's iron codes. He would have enjoyed the conflicts, in spite of the inevitable defeat, if it had not been for their effect on Gertrude. She was growing steadily more sober, grimmer, more determined. She had little thought to waste on Elmer. now; her mind was engaged with sterner matters than exploring the Wampscogg or driving through the crisp nights at Elmer's elbow. He suggested New York in vain; he proposed extravagances in the matter of furs, and even jewels, to be met with impatient refusals.

"That won't do any good. I've got too much as it is. That's one trouble. They're all against me because we've got more than anybody else."

He observed that she had begun to wear conservative clothes instead of the smart things she had loved. But he did not suspect the truth until it was too late to avert it. It dawned upon him with the sudden, shocking crash of an exploding cannon one November afternoon when he came home early with a faint hope of persuading Gertrude to amuse him. Voices came to him from the parlor as he stood in the hall. Gertrude was speaking.

"My dear, I feel terribly about it all. I can't forgive myself for having yielded to him. He's a terribly obstinate man, of course, but that doesn't

excuse me. After my strict bringing-up, too. I've stood it as long as I can."

"And the way we misjudged you!" He heard the unmistakable rumble of Mrs. Dobie's chest tones. "We thought you agreed with him in everything—drinking and—and even smoking—"

"He—he insisted so, you know." Gertrude's voice was humble. "And I was just married . . . it makes so much difference . . . but I've made up my mind at last. It's going to stop. I've spoken to Mr. Dobie about a pew—the old Bixby pew at the right of the pulpit, you know. . . ."

Elmer clutched at the hat-rack for support. His horrified ears caught disconnected snatches of catastrophic speech.

". . . a new leader in our activities . . . your rightful place among us . . . your influence with Mr. Bixby . . . power for good in the community . . ."

VI

It was six months later that Elmer Bixby listened to the opening address of the new President of the Grimfield Civic Club. Several men congratulated him warmly on his wife's performance, but Elmer caught a subtle hint in the repressed malice of their tone and look. He remembered suddenly that Bert Dobie had once held the three-cushion championship at the billiard hall, that Joe Hickson had habitually preferred to do his fishing on Sabbath mornings, that his own first experiment with strong drink had been made in the company of these two gentlemen. It occurred to him that none of them had been married then.

He stepped forward nervously as he caught his wife's eye, beckoning. As he announced that his contribution to the Civic Club's fund for enforcing the liquor law would be one hundred dollars a frantic burst of hand-clapping assailed his ears.

It had a curiously explosive sound to Elmer Bixby. For some reason it made him think of a bombshell.

PARABLES FROM A PAGAN BIBLE

By Winthrop Parkhurst

I

THE sceptic preached in a loud voice that all religions are useless. And the better to prove his point he bought large numbers of sacred books and diligently exposed their errors. . . . It happened, however, that one night the weather came bitter cold and, having no wood in the house, he thought to warm himself by putting the books into his stove and burning them. Now the result proved so pleasant and the heat of the blaze seemed so cheerful to his shivering limbs he was moved to exclaim:

"I have been wrong to talk against religion. Religion, if properly understood, is exceedingly valuable. I will never talk against religion again."

And on the following day he laid in a larger supply of the books than ever. Nor was he ever without a goodly stock to ward off chilly weather.

II

A POET and a mathematician died and went to hell. After seven thousand and seven years it chanced that they met each other on the main street of gehenna.

Said the poet to the mathematician: "Seven thousand and seven years ago I died on earth and was sent here to be punished for my sins. Until I met you I could not quite see why they called this place hell. Now, however, I understand."

Said the mathematician to the poet with a bow:

"You know, I was thinking the same thought myself. It is evident that as a

matter of efficiency we were sent here to supply hell to each other."

III

WEeping sorely because his love had fled away, it chanced that the poet's tears fell to the ground in such numbers that a rose suddenly bloomed at his feet.

"Ah!" exclaimed the poet, "what a beautiful rose this is!"

And stooping down he picked it and sent it to a very pretty young woman who lived across the street.

IV

"LOVE," said the poet, "is the only reality in the world."

He died; and in his hand was found clutched a letter from his mistress saying she had become tired and was leaving him.

V

THE lover, who was a desperate fellow and ever had an eye to the dramatic, slew himself in a rage, saying:

"Ha! she may say she loves another, but when she hears I have killed myself for her sake her life will be poisoned utterly."

Now it happened that nine years afterward a certain lady and her husband, while walking in a field outside the town, came upon a piece of ground, the peculiar richness of which caught the husband's eye.

"I think this ought to be a good place, dear," said he. And planting his spade vigorously in the soil, he

turned up at one stroke a dozen fat worms; which worms, when they had been properly attached to hooks and dropped from the side of the rowboat, proved a very tempting morsel indeed. And soon the fish were biting merrily.

VI

THE moon came up slowly from behind the hills. In the valley, below, two people had sat patiently waiting for it. One was a ploughboy who wanted the light to scribble some verses by. The other was an old woman with grey hair who wanted to read a few faded lines of poetry, sent to her in her youth, before she put the bottle of poison to her lips.

VII

NAPOLEON dipped his pen in the blood of a million warriors and wrote biography. An artist dipped his pen in the blood of one woman he loved and wrote history.

VIII

IN the city of Gomorrah there was once a king who, becoming weary of love and of the idea of love, ordered that all women in the country should be slain. . . . In the city of Tyre there was once a preacher who, becoming weary of eternity and of the idea of eternity, took the best clock from his mantel shelf and hurled it furiously against the pavement.



EXPLAIN THEM

By Charles Glendon

I DO not claim to understand women
* * *

I kiss Jane. She adores me.

I strike Elsie. She adores me.

I swear at Donna. She adores me.

I write poetry about Julia. She adores me.

I send flowers daily to Jeanette. She adores me.

I let Isabelle pay for my luncheon. She adores me.

I tell my wife about these other women. She adores me.
* * *

I do not claim to understand women.



SOCIETY frowns on love as a gratuity or a commodity. The only legitimate transaction is exchange.



THE only safe widow to marry is one whose first husband was hanged.

THE LAST DAY

By V. H. Friedlaender

I

FOR a long time Michael Fothergill had no idea that whenever he admired Evelyn Brooke he was criticising Lucie Fisher. He saw them both each day at the office where, like himself, they were clerks; but whereas he travelled up to town regularly every morning with Lucie, and returned every evening with her to her suburban home because he boarded with the Fishers, he felt as far removed from Miss Brooke as if she had been a "client"—one of those exotic feminine beings who glided upon the office horizon with soft voices and musical laughter and frail, costly garments and elusive scents and little dogs sticking out of enormous muffs, and then faded into distant backgrounds of wealth as completely as if they no longer existed.

Yet of all these cliental attributes Miss Brooke possessed only two—the soft voice and the musical laugh. These had at first a strange effect on Michael: he wanted them to stop. For he discovered that, however contented he might be—making ingenious toys when business was slack, for instance, with Hilton, his neighbour, or chaffing Lucie in the rather familiar way that she loved—at the sound of Miss Brooke's voice or laugh his contentment died, and was succeeded by a sick feeling of impatience and restlessness, a longing for something that he could not see clearly. Later, he began to welcome that very restlessness as a thing that must eventually lead him *somewhere*, and at the same time he found himself taking pleasure in the most trivial of Miss Brooke's actions. She was slim, dark

and of medium height, and she was not actually pretty, as he told himself over and over again. But he liked to watch her walk across the office or bend over her work the head that was never either untidy or prim, but about which the shining hair clung and wound in loose plaits, as if for sheer pleasure in a grace of outline that needed no help from pads, curls, ribbons or combs. And at lunchtime or at six in the evening he would linger, if opportunity offered, in order that he might covertly enjoy Miss Brooke's neat, swift way of putting on her hat and coat. She dressed very plainly in dark hats and navy blue coats and skirts, but sometimes, pinned to the coat, there was a bunch of violets (which, unlike Lucie's buttonholes, never died a tawdry death), and always in the hats there was somewhere a gracious curve.

You couldn't say she was not "feminine," Michael insisted to himself, as though someone had levelled this deadliest of office criticisms at Miss Brooke's shapely head. But that was merely negative and therefore unsatisfying; what she preëminently *was* eluded him for weeks. Then it came to him one day with a triumphant finality. "Distinction": the word dropped from nowhere into his brain, and stayed. After that, whenever he watched her he inwardly tested its efficacy, and it never failed as a description of the thing about her that gave him such strange pleasure and excitement. But he did not dream of sharing his discovery of Miss Brooke's distinction with anyone; indeed, he was recurrently astonished by his own delight in the thing and in the

word. It was a word he had hardly known that he knew—the last word, certainly, to be appreciated or even understood in the Fisher circle, and the Fisher circle had been his almost ever since he could remember.

It was the last word, moreover, that could have been applied to Lucie. Pretty she always was, in a fair and fluffy way, and amiable about half the time; but the prettiness was of the tragically evanescent order, and when it was done the amiability would inevitably follow suit. Not that Michael knew this; Lucie was twenty and at her best, and he himself was only two years older. But his unconscious comparison of the girls took the form at about this time of a half irritated wish that Lucie would spell her name in the ordinary way. He even suggested it to her—and it was one of the occasions when she was not amiable.

Lucy—Lucie! how, indeed, could she have done other than resent the suggestion? For it was utterly characteristic of her to have made that terminal change as she grew up—characteristic of the petty vanity, the devouring egotism that ravaged her and demanded that she should be different from other and ordinary Lucys. So they had what Lucie called “a tiff,” and travelled home that evening in different compartments of the same train.

But Michael, soothed without knowing it by the unwonted absence of chatter pouring in Lucie’s faintly Cockney voice from Lucie’s vapid and underbred mind, apologized handsomely to her as they met again in the dense crowd on the stairs of their suburban station. As a result, they arrived at the over-furnished, over-inhabited Fisher residence in the over-familiar concord beloved of Lucie’s soul, and at dinner they were subjected to a fire of arch hints and sportive double meanings and hackneyed jests. For the Fisher household, to whom Lucie had confided the incident of the name, was not one to let slip so auspicious a dinner-table topic as a tiff.

II

It was on a long succession of such hints and jests and double meanings that their engagement finally established itself. If Michael was a little startled the first time he understood it really was an engagement, he had an innate chivalry that forbade him to admit that qualm, even to himself. It was his doing, he told himself; of course it was his doing! Lucie was very much admired at the office, and could have been engaged to any one of at least five or six young men. If she considered herself engaged to him, it could only be because he had given her unmistakable proof that he desired her to be so. He even thought—after that first warning tremor—that he wanted to marry Lucie, for the only world of girls that he knew was full of Lucies, and she was the prettiest and the most “refined” of them. (Lucie was an authority on the subject of refinement, and was constantly putting him to the blush because of his inferior susceptibility to its laws.)

So their engagement was announced, and with quip and crank both the Fisher circle and the office hailed and made the most of it. Only Miss Brooke waited until he and Lucie and she happened to be alone together in the office, before coming up to offer them both her congratulations. Then she did it gracefully, and Lucie was pleased, as her first remark showed when she and Michael went out to lunch together.

“Miss Brooke isn’t pretty, of course,” she observed indulgently, “and it’s a pity she doesn’t take the trouble to be a little more dressy, but she’s very refined, don’t you think?”

“Yes,” Michael said, and was startled by the violence of his desire to say no. What had Miss Brooke to do with his and Lucie’s refinements? He knew instinctively somehow that she belonged to another world, although he was never able to call up any convincing image of it.

It was that afternoon that he first noticed in Miss Brooke’s eyes what he

came to call vaguely "the look." He had just sat down at his desk after the lunch hour, and Miss Brooke passed him a moment later on her way to hers. He drew in his chair a little for her, and she smiled down at him, nodding her thanks. She was always like that—very polite and kind and even friendly to everybody, so that the office supposed it knew all about her. Whereas, as Michael had observed, it knew practically nothing about her; it was only that she knew all about *it*, and used her knowledge with tact and discretion.

But on this afternoon something about her knowledge of him seemed to puzzle her. Her eyes lingered on him longer than usual, and he had a new impression of himself as being somehow, for Miss Brooke, a sum that wouldn't come right. He would have liked, of course, to come right, if she wanted him to; but at the same time he very much liked the look, too, which spoke of an interest that was half sympathy and half a sort of brooding compassion akin to tenderness. Somehow the look, moreover, was connected with that obscure eagerness and excitement that she awakened in him; if he could guess what the one meant he would know the reason for the other.

But he couldn't guess, although after that he often saw "the look" in her eyes. No doubt before long Lucie would have seen it, too, and resented it, for she was nothing if not jealously possessive; and she would not have been able to understand or believe in his own simple, deep conviction that whatever Miss Brooke's interest in him might be it was not an interest of sex. But Lucie, claimed by the sacred institution of the trousseau, left the office three months before the date of the wedding, and a little later her refinement apprised her that Michael ought to abandon the Fisher residence for rooms in town until they were married. So he went, and although Lucie saw to it that all his leisure was still spent in her company, there were the office days in which to wait for "the look," and night and morning hours in

his quiet rooms in which to think about and try to understand it.

He was very happy, on the whole, during those months. Lucie was pleased and occupied and excited, and consequently almost always amiable; he found an unexpected pleasure in his new mode of life, because for the first time he was enjoying, however sparingly, the taste of solitude and space and liberty; and in addition he had always that strange, exultant sense of approaching some secret of vital importance.

What was it? He did not know, and the weeks slipped by without his finding out. Yet he remained untroubled. For somehow he knew that if he didn't succeed in finding out, Miss Brooke would tell him. He could not have said how he knew. They spoke no oftener than before, and always of trivial matters; they never lunched together or did any of the things that might have sent a mischief-maker gleefully tale-bearing to Lucie: it was only that, as time passed, the look seemed to be more and more urgent, seemed to be appealing to him to find out for himself and not force her to tell him.

III

THE wedding was fixed for a Saturday in late January, and it had been arranged that he should take one week of his summer holiday then, for the honeymoon. He had expected to be at the office until Friday evening, but on the morning of Thursday, when he took some letters into the manager's room, the latter looked at him for a moment instead of at them.

"So Saturday's the day?" he enquired with a smile.

"Yes, sir." Michael prepared for a managerial version of office chaff. Yet here he shrank from it; he liked the manager.

"And don't you want your bachelor fling, Fothergill?"

"My—what, sir?"

"Your last day of liberty, you young ass. Or are you too young even to

realise that it is the last? Well, well! You can take it, anyhow, as we're pretty slack. You're off from this evening, boy—but Monday week, remember! Congratulations and good luck." (If it had not been absurd, Michael would have said that at this point "the look," which belonged exclusively to Miss Brooke, had found its way into the manager's eyes.) "And—Fothergill!"

"Sir?"

"You haven't asked for a raise. How's that?"

Michael flushed. It was the one point on which he had withstood Lucie, and there had been trouble about it.

"Oh—I don't know," he mumbled awkwardly.

"Don't you? I do. You thought it too soon, because I gave you a raise a few months ago. And so you wouldn't apply the usual screw of marriage. Wasn't that it?"

Michael looked acutely uncomfortable, for it was a reason that had aroused a storm of contemptuous derision in Fisher hearts. He said nothing.

"Well, it was decent of you, Fothergill," the manager said warmly. "I don't believe there's another boy in the office who'd have had that scruple. And scrupulousness is a quality I happen to have a weakness for—particularly in a secretary. Merton leaves next week because he hasn't got it. Would you like to take his place?"

Yet again Michael was dumb, but now his eyes answered for him.

The manager smiled. "All right. When you can do Merton's work you'll get his salary. Meanwhile, it's a year's raise of fifty pounds."

Michael told no one of that conversation or of his extra day. The former was too precious; the latter, he realised, would give him the welcome chance to slip away unsuspected, and avoid the final avalanche of office witticisms.

As he went out, free, into the keen air that evening he suddenly knew what he was going to do with his extra day. He was going to skate, and perhaps in the long hours of freedom and exercise

and the open air the secret would be revealed to him. If not—he would get back to town and the office by six o'clock in order to catch Miss Brooke on her way home, and she would tell him at last, when he asked her.

As he joined the *queue* at the Tube station and waited to get his ticket, he saw that Miss Brooke, as occasionally happened, was his neighbour. She smiled, but rather hurriedly and evasively. Almost he could have supposed that she was ashamed about something.

"Oh, I'm glad I haven't quite missed you," she said with a nervous airiness. "You'll be at the office tomorrow, of course, but I shan't, because I'm just starting my holiday."

He winced at the shock of it. He had been so certain of her—and she was going to fail him. He knew now that she meant to fail him, and that it was because she knew it, too, that she was ashamed. But he said something quite different.

"You? I say, what rotten luck! Why should *you* have to take your holiday in January?"

Her laugh was forced and flippant. "Oh, last come is first served—with holidays—in offices, isn't it? It was now or never. And I don't mind the now a bit, you know, if the frost holds. I'm going skating."

"Tomorrow? So am I."

"You're going—? But aren't you—?" It was obvious that she was disconcerted to find that the effort she had made to shake herself free of him only brought him nearer.

"No. I'm off, too, from tonight."

They had their tickets now, yet she did not attempt to leave him. And he found that he knew why. It was just because she had that sense of guilt—of betrayal towards him; by that he could hold her, if he were quick.

"Miss Brooke."

"Yes?"

"You've decided to go skating tomorrow. So have I. It's my last day. Can we go together?"

She stood very still while the homeward-bound crowd swirled round them.

Exultantly he contrasted her grave hesitation with the giggling, self-conscious archness that Lucie and her like would have brought to bear on such a request. He knew that she was weighing his real desire, which was that she should, after all, tell him the secret.

She decided at last, and he rejoiced not only in the decision, but in the knowledge that it must be the right one for both of them, because it relieved her of that shadow of hurried evasion that was so unnatural to her.

"Yes," she said, steady-eyed, "I'd like very much to come. Where shall we meet, then?"

IV

THEY settled the details and parted. Both of them knew what the decision involved, and one of them was passionately grateful. Lucie would certainly hear eventually from someone at the office of Michael's extra day. Even if she did not hear how it had been spent it would mean a storm of jealous anger for him; if she did, it would mean in addition such a stream of vulgar vilification for Miss Brooke as would almost certainly drive her from the office. Because Miss Brooke was facing that without shrinking, he knew with a great finality how important it must be for him to know the secret. And because she was ready to risk so much for him, he had at least to make that risk as small as forethought could make it. He pondered on that all the way home, and found that really the only possible thing he could do to help was to tell a lie.

He told it cheerfully the next morning to his landlady, when she brought his breakfast. And he had the sense (in case of accident) to prop up his one lie with as many harmless truths as possible. He had had a raise, he explained, and an extra day's holiday. The former he intended to celebrate as soon as he went out by changing the bridesmaid's brooches for better ones; the latter he proposed to dedicate to a search, in obscure quarters round about the docks, for a grey and pink talking

cockatoo that his *fiancée* desired for "company" in the long hours, after the honeymoon, of his immurement at the office.

Mrs. Pierce was all unsuspecting interest and approval, urging only the necessity for caution in adventuring near "them nasty foreign 'oles," and the advisability of his making his last call on Lucie, when the parrot was obtained, a discreetly short one. They had a brisk passage of arms (Mrs. Pierce adored him for what she called his "liveliness") on the subject of how young ladies liked to spend their last day of liberty; then Michael ate his breakfast, threw his overcoat over his arm, concealed his parcel of skates beneath it, and left the house with the pleasant consciousness of not having made a mess of his lie.

On his way to the station he called at the jeweller's, returned the brooches, paid the difference on the substituted ones and arranged for them to be sent to his rooms during the day. Two minutes after he reached the platform Miss Brooke joined him, and he saw at once that this was to be not the restrained, unobtrusive, efficient Miss Brooke of office days, but Evelyn Brooke, a girl sparkling with spontaneity and the holiday spirit.

"Guess what I've got on under this!" she demanded at once, in place of formal greeting, and pointed to her long coat. "You can't!—you never will! Because it's a *sweater*. Not a jersey that buttons snugly up the front and that you wear in offices because of the draught, but a sweater that you drag over your head and tousele it—a sweater, country and unashamed and *old*!"

Old or not, the dull amethyst hue of it and of the short tweed skirt above her brown boots and of the cap on her head seemed to Michael the only perfect colour on the ice that day. They both skated well, and generally together, but once, when her skates needed readjustment, she would not let him wait for her, and he went off to a far corner to practise figures. She had seen

him, though, for she nodded approvingly when he rejoined her.

"Jolly!" she said. "Give me a lesson after lunch, will you? How have you found time for learning so many—frills?"

"Oh—I suppose because I like it; I've taken every chance." He spoke diffidently; Lucie had not accustomed him to sympathy on this (to her) profitless taste. "I'm rather a kid still, I'm afraid, over things of that sort—skating and swimming and dancing and things."

"You're built for skill in them," she returned simply, for her thoughts had been busy with him as she watched. She had noted what skating accentuated in him—a certain native breeziness, a vigour, the swing of square, athletic, lean shoulders.

"I've discovered something about you," she told him gaily, as they took the ice again together. "It's puzzled me for ages, and now I know what it is. It's that you look like an *American*."

"Do I?" His heart gave an odd leap. "Why—how queer! Because—well, I am one, I suppose, partly. My mother was American."

"Really?" She quickened to eager interest. "That explains, then—" But she swerved off from whatever it explained. "What part? No, you needn't tell me! It was the South, of course!"

"Yes, it was—" he began, but broke off because he perceived that her thoughts had already sped past that point to another. She was looking straight ahead with a little, absorbed smile.

"She will have danced—your mother . . ." she threw out softly, with a kind of musing pleasure, as if she were actually watching that dancing at the moment.

And suddenly, because of that, *he* saw his mother dancing—dancing with a joyous, rhythmic lightness, a clean positiveness of grace utterly unlike the slurring slovenliness of movement, the languorousness attitudinising of any unskilled Lucie. He was amazed; hitherto his mother had been to him only

the dimmest of dusty memories and a face in a faded photograph. Something swelled in his throat.

"I would like to have known your mother," Evelyn Brooke was saying, still in that preoccupied murmur that was like an accompaniment to something seen.

"She died," he said, and for the first time in his life passionately regretted it; "she died before I was five years old. So did my father. It was cholera. I had to be sent to England, because there were no near relatives of hers to take charge of me. At least—there *were*, but they wouldn't forgive her even then for marrying my father. She belonged to an old Virginia family."

"And he?"

"He was English—and nothing except what he'd made himself, which was an engineer. His father was a clerk all his life, and his mother had served in a shop before she married."

"But they were happy—*your* father and mother?" she challenged.

Evidences crowded to his mind. "Oh, yes, they were happy! I'm sure enough of that."

She nodded, satisfied.

"He will have been different, then, don't you see" she said confidently. "He will have been himself—not just a little chopped off piece of a family that you can fit exactly back into its place like a bit of a jig-saw puzzle, but a real person who had *gone on*. He will have developed force, brains, personality—something that was strong enough to sweep away differences, since he *kept* her happy."

"Yes, I believe there must have been something like that," he admitted, astounded by her penetration.

She was leading and he following, although the scanty facts were all in his possession, not in hers. And already he knew, too, that she was leading further than he could yet see.

"I've sometimes thought," he added shyly, "that my father must have been rather—fine. Not that his own people think so at all! It was *his* relatives,

you know, who took me in and brought me up on the interest of the very little money that there was, and it's always been plain they had a—down on him; but—that doesn't always mean that people have been—rotten, does it?"

"Of course not. As often as not it only means that they haven't been understood."

"Yes—yes!" he agreed, kindling to the thought he had not been able to express. "Well, I think that was how it must have been with my father. He went his own way, and his relatives condemned him because they couldn't see that his way was finer; they could only see that it was different."

"The Fishers?" she asked casually.

In spite of the tact that had dictated the casualness, he flushed, for he saw now that in criticising the Fishers he was inevitably including Lucie.

"Yes. At least"—he stumbled—"it is only Mrs. Fisher who was his cousin—his second cousin."

She was tender for his distress.

"I say, I *am* hungry!" she declared. "There are sandwiches in my coat over there; shall we have them now?"

They had them then, and afterwards they had two more glorious hours of skating. Then Evelyn Brooke remembered a cottage where they could get tea, and they climbed a hill to reach it. At the top they turned for one more look at the lake, and that was a moment that Michael was to remember all his life, because it let him into a new kingdom.

V

IN the sunset the stretch of ice lay warmly flushed, like a rose-petal held against the face of the sun. It was she who softly voiced the comparison; it was he whose sight was dimmed by it with the blinding stab of a new pain that was yet all rapture. For he might have seen the lake with Lucie; he might even have seen that it was beautiful; but what Evelyn Brooke had done was to show him that a particular image, a particular combination of words could turn enjoyment into sheer ecstasy.

They knocked at the cottage door and asked for tea, and as they waited for it there was a distraction.

A small boy, weeping out of a heart broken by disillusionment, came in from the kitchen and sank forlornly on to the floor. From his arms fell a toy aeroplane.

Evelyn Brooke hastened to pick up the weeper, Michael to pick up the toy.

"Something gone wrong with it, sonny?" he asked interestedly. "Won't it fly?"

The small boy, visited by a delirious hope, ceased to weep. In Evelyn Brooke's ministrations he recognised the familiar soothing-syrup that attempted to console a person for the overwhelming deceitfulness of life; but in Michael of the firm, testing fingers he perceived that much more interesting figure—a possible deliverer from deceitfulness.

"It—it didn't never have to fly," he explained honestly. "But it *did* ought to wun along the gground. And now it w-won't." The enormity of the aeroplane's guilt in refusing even so limited a service nearly broke him down again.

But Michael had found the seat of the mischief.

"Why, it's only the india-rubber, juggins," he said in cheerful absorption. "You've wound it up so often that it's gone slack. See? Wait a minute. I might have a rubber band in my pocket. . . ."

When the toy was mended and the owner dismissed, Michael became aware that Evelyn Brooke was smiling at him, and that in her eyes was "the look."

"What is it?" he asked, abased.

"Forgive me! It was only—your being so plainly your father's son as well as your mother's."

Gradually, as they sat at tea, he began to see what she meant. His mending of a toy, his delight in the mechanical devices that he and Hilton contrived in office hours, his deep interest in every form of machinery—these were a direct legacy from his father—the father who had been dead for seventeen

years. It was the strangest thing—this intimate thrill that Evelyn Brooke was imparting to everything connected with his parents. And how far it took him from the office and suburban trains and the Fisher circle and Lucie—*Lucie* . . .

He began to wonder what his life would have been like if his parents had lived; he began, by piecing together his scraps of memory and evidence, to see what it would have been like—the difference, the beautiful difference. Again a storm of regret and tenderness swept over him. He saw what there must have been of strength and high courage, of laughter and splendid adventure about his parents; and he had missed all that living in such an atmosphere would have meant to him. He had missed *them*—missed something that they (or was it only Evelyn Brooke?) stood for. No, it was all of them! She was in the secret, but so had they been, too. And she knew it, and was trying to let him in with them all. . . .

Tea ended, and with the thought of his ending day he fell sober and silent. But as they got out of the train at the London terminus his spirits rose again with a rush. For Evelyn Brooke turned to him and said, "Will you come and have supper with us?"

He went. He did not know where he was going; he did not wonder over the significance of that "us." He knew only that his last day had been perfect, that this last evening, however he might be going to spend it, would be perfect, too, and that, in addition, it would bring him still nearer to the discovery of his secret.

So, although he felt surprised, he did not feel tricked when the door of a flat was opened by a man whom Evelyn Brooke introduced as her husband. He was glad that he did not feel tricked; it proved, at least, that the queerness of his present state was not due to his being in love with Evelyn Brooke. After the first minute it even seemed to him that her being married was a thing he must always have known subconscious-

ly; certainly he was, by means of it, one step nearer to his secret.

They did not tell him much about themselves; it did not seem to be necessary, for it was gradually and naturally unfolded by all the things they did and were. (How different, he marvelled, from the Fishers, who told everything in uninteresting, garrulous detail—except those things that they gigglingly withheld, and that were even more wearily obvious.) Here nothing was obvious, but everything was discernible, if one thought about it.

At no later time in his life could he have said how he became acquainted with the facts that the tall, thin man who, while his wife changed her dress, laid an extra place at the table and talked about the colours of Spanish irises, was an architect; that he had been seriously ill for a long time and was now getting better; that his wife had gone into an office because otherwise they could not have tided over the disaster of his illness; that she had gone in her maiden name because she had found it impossible to obtain work in her married one; and that, in spite of that work, poverty was still at least as close to this small flat as to the Fisher house, although here it was met in so different a spirit—with no vulgar ostentation in public and ugly economy in private, but with a splendid young frankness, courage and gaiety. All he could have said was that he simply did know these things, just as he knew that there was a bunch of many-coloured anemones in a black bowl on the table, and books (altogether different from Fisher books) on long, open shelves against the walls. For that was the way in which ever afterwards his evening revealed itself to him—not in an ordered sequence, beginning with introductions, proceeding through the preparation, eating and clearing away of supper and ending with coffee, smoking and hours of talk, but as vivid, revealing flashes in which a word, a gesture, a colour, a laugh or a silence tore yet another veil from his eyes, and left him

looking more closely at the sordidness of the past—and of the future.

The last flash but one was of husband and wife standing outside their door and smiling a most friendly, heartening smile at him as he prepared to descend the three flights of stairs. They stood, without any false shame, in an attitude obviously very natural and customary with them—he with an arm thrown across her shoulder, she with her head resting in the hollow beneath it.

"Good-bye!" they said together, ending the word with some bracing, stirring quality; and "Good-bye!" he answered with a long, last look.

For he knew it was the last. It was not only that they had never mentioned Lucie or the morrow, and never asked him to come again; it was that he was now on the very brink of his secret, and that, whatever it revealed to him, he knew already (because they knew it) that it was to sever him inexorably from these two.

The fact made their farewell seem dreamlike to him; he saw them through a mist; almost it was as though he were drunk—drunk with the imminence of his tremendous secret.

His footsteps on the stairs were the only sound, for it was late. But through the noise he made he was conscious of listening all the time for another sound—the shutting of a door. And it did not come.

At the bottom he paused, and looked up the wall of the staircase. Dimly, by the one light that was left burning all night, he saw a head that bent over the top rail, heard a faint sound that came down to him from between cupped hands, as though, on a boundless sea, he were being hailed from the shore for the last time . . . "Good-bye!—*Good luck!*" Then in the gloom something smote, soft and cool, against his upturned face, and far overhead a door shut at last. He felt about the floor and picked up a flower—one of the glowing, rosy anemones that had been in the black bowl on the table and at

the waist of Evelyn Brooke's smoke-blue dress.

And that was the last flash belonging to his evening; after that he was alone on his boundless sea, heading inescapably towards that shattering rock, his secret. Only, once or twice when he was inclined to think he was dreaming, and to go home to bed where dreams were permissible, the anemone, with its assurance of actuality, checked him, and sent him plunging again upon his way.

VI

It came at last—the moment that he had known would be like the shock of total shipwreck. And then he seemed to himself to be choking in icy waters of disillusionment; fighting, as though for life, for that ideal of honour, courage and distinction to which he had given the name of Evelyn Brooke. For it could not be *this* towards which, through long months now, she had been leading him!—this discovery that he might still, if he chose, be a cad and not marry Lucie.

At first he saw it, in all its panoply of stereotyped phrases, as sheer cad-dishness: leading a girl on—jilting her—deserting her on the very eve of her marriage; he saw himself as a scoundrel, never again knowing self-respect or peace of mind. It was only after he had walked himself, through endless streets, into that condition of physical exhaustion which is sometimes attended by a period of great mental clarity, that he began to have doubts of the picture he had drawn of himself—and of Lucie.

He *was* thinking (though hardly seriously, as yet) of deserting a girl on the eve of her marriage; but, after all, that wasn't the whole of it! And supposing he could do it so that no real loss, and no shame or humiliation, had to be borne by Lucie?—supposing he were willing still to give her everything else, to sacrifice friends, prospects, money to her—everything except himself?

It was the first time he had seen himself as his own most precious posses-

sion, but now, on the instant of seeing it, he was jealous for that immeasurable ownership—immeasurable because as yet he had barely begun to know himself!

How well he now knew *that*, at any rate! He was twenty-two; a boy who so far had been almost completely passive in his attitude towards life; a boy forced by circumstances into a clerkship—into the first beaten track that it required neither effort nor money to enter—into the kind of blind-alley life against which his father had passionately revolted, and from which he had escaped—to real work, to love, to happiness. He himself did not yet know what he wanted to be or do; all he knew was that if he married Lucie he would never do it or be it, not so much because he was married and consequently hampered, as because there was in Lucie a rooted vulgarity of mind, a sluggish, invincible mediocrity of soul, so that other minds and souls in contact with hers must be either beaten to that level or wrench themselves utterly free. Hard work, increase of salary, a manager's kindly interest and influence—none of these could deliver him, if he were Lucie's husband, from the body of that death. It was not just snobbishness to which Evelyn Brooke urged him; it was not because his mother's family had been what the Fishers called "swells" that he ought not to marry Lucie. His father had not been a "swell," yet Evelyn Brooke had not distinguished between his parents. No; it was because people (once they understood about it) had definitely to add as much fineness and courage and high endeavour and gaiety and beauty to the world as they could; they had to try to live splendidly—not to get choked by the common dust of their days.

It was a spiritual, not a genealogical matter; people had to give the very best of themselves to the world of which they were links in a chain; and if he married Lucie he would never give the best of himself to anything. And if they had children? He saw suddenly how helpless he would be to rescue Lu-

cie's children from Lucie's sordid mental atmosphere: helpless—yet awfully responsible. To marry her was a betrayal of his heritage—the heritage of healthier body, better brains, finer instincts of which his parents (the parents to whom Evelyn Brooke had so astonishingly introduced him) had welded the link that was himself. It was worse than that; it was to deny the fair claim of every good workman that his successor should not only equal but better results as the fruit of that good work. His dead parents, who had given him of their best, had a right to demand that his best, when he gave it, should be better than theirs. He had to—what was Evelyn Brooke's phrase?—to *go on*.

With a new humility he saw that his time for link-making was not yet; first he had to find himself; afterwards he would know when he had found his mate. And then the chain of the world's life, mental and spiritual no less than physical, might be strengthened, not weakened, by his having been born. . . .

But what was the use of his finding out all this *now*? Tomorrow—in a few hours—he would be married to Lucie. If Evelyn Brooke had told him six months ago, he might have steeled himself to neglect Lucie—to bring on that crisis which would secure his release by making her prefer one of her other admirers. If he had been told even two months—one month—ago—!

With a shock the truth smote him. Why—he had not been *told* even now! It was not the sort of thing that a person could be told. Evelyn Brooke had done as much as anyone could; she had for months silently, yet vehemently, appealed to him to see it for himself, and now he had seen it. But it was his own fault, not hers, that he had seen it too late.

Too late? He struggled in the toils of the hopeless phrase—and something snapped. *Was* it too late? Instantly in answer the way of escape stretched before him. Its course was the course of the river that for a long time now he had been unconsciously following,

but it was not that broad stream itself; it was like a mere ribbon of water, a narrow thread that ran alongside of it. Narrow—but navigable! He studied it in amazement, in growing excitement—and it remained navigable.

First there was his lie to the landlady that morning: how easily the truths in which he had embedded it—his extra day, his call at the jeweller's, his improved prospects at the office, Lucie's desire for a cockatoo—could be confirmed; how impossible on the other hand, for anyone (except Evelyn Brooke, who would never do it) to disprove that he had spent his day as he had said he should. And what a natural theory to account for his disappearance that lie would furnish! Had not even the landlady's first thought in connection with it been the dangers lurking in those strange quarters, those cosmopolitan rabbit-warrens for which he had announced that he was bound? He had had money with him, too—enough money to supply a motive for foul play—money that he had drawn out of the bank for the honeymoon, and the absence of which from his belongings could not fail to be noticed, since Lucie had known about it. The jeweller, moreover, would testify that there had been other £5 notes in the pocket-book from which he had drawn the one that paid the difference on the brooches. For the rest, there would be nothing to indicate an intention of not returning to his rooms, since in truth he had never dreamed of not returning to them.

And all that meant that no one would suspect the truth. Lucie would be, indeed, the recipient of sympathy, but not of the pity that alone could gall her. For he recognised now very clearly that it was not he himself who was essential to Lucie; it was the married state, the position, the home and money for which he stood. Well, all these she could have—without him. His will, lately drawn in her favour, left her his small, untouched capital, as well as everything else that he possessed. In time she would obtain them. And in

the meanwhile one of the other young men at the office would ask her to marry him, and she would consent and be happy again.

He turned from the thought of Lucie to the thought of himself. And there, instantly, the way was clear indeed—summed up in a single word: America!

Evelyn Brooke had released some unsuspected spring when she told him that he looked like an American. Now he walked more swiftly, more purposefully for the thought; and sometimes as he walked he smiled, sometimes the river lights grew dim to his eyes. . . .

It was not that he nursed any of the emigrant's pathetic illusions about America. He knew well that it would resolve itself on closer acquaintance into a place not wholly unlike England. And yet—there was something!—some insistent urge of the blood and of the spirit that was like a lover's passion. To America his father had gone; in America he had chosen to make his home; from America had come that strain of something in himself that was alien to the English Fishers; in America somewhere, at some time, he would find what his father had found—the work that would be not routine toil but love's ardent, creative labour; he would find himself; he would find eventually that other whom the years held close-folded until he had grown, and grown more worthy. And always, always he would remember this day's revelation that life was a thing to be lived splendidly. . . .

VII

A SUBTLE change in the feeling of the night penetrated his consciousness. He stopped and looked round. The streets about him were still dark and silent in sleep; mean streets and narrow and numerous; he did not know where he was. But as he paused the dawn opened a misty vista before him. At first he thought he was looking at some illusory cloud-architecture in the forest of tall tree-stems that was rising out of the

night. But the light grew and his heart leapt, for it was a forest of masts at which he looked, and it drew him with an irresistible tension.

Presently, very near his journey's end, he was on a bridge, and the winter sun was rising. A line of linked barges glided forward beneath his feet, and as they came from under the bridge the sun caught them one by one, touching them to gold—and divinity. He felt again the sharp shiver of delight to which, no less than to his parents, Evelyn Brooke had introduced him. And in that moment he knew that it was worth it—it was all well worth it!—the cutting adrift, the poverty, the uncertainty, the loneliness—for this chance to feel that shiver again, to go forth free and find out the meaning of it.

But—Lucie? Because of that chivalry of his he had to test again every step of the mental road that he had travelled on his last day. He could not

cast himself blindly, even on Evelyn Brooke, for guidance in this matter. *Would* he be doing any real injury to Lucie? A conviction of that would have turned him back even now.

But it did not come. Instead, another and a startlingly humorous conviction came for a moment in its place. He seemed to himself to be not Michael Fothergill but that other young man with whom (and in how short a time!) Lucie would link her fortunes. And in the character of that other, nebulous suitor he heard, as plainly as though Lucie stood indeed by his side, the actual phrase of unanswerable idiocy in which she would both sum up and dismiss the past: "Well, doesn't it just *show*, dear, that there's always bad luck if you change your name and not your initial?"

And then—in his own character, and out of a heart free at last of all misgiving—he laughed.



CONSISTENCY

By Thomas Effing

WHO prided himself on being an aesthete and raved over Beauty in its slightest form? Who was extolled as a connoisseur of beautiful women and who was it who said ugliness was more hideous than sin? Who was it who declared that when the sun of Beauty had set he would die also? Smith, of course.

Whose wife was it who had three double chins, a cast in her left eye, a wen on the tip of her nose and a figure that would make a straight cylinder look in comparison like the crouching Venus? Smith's, of course.



IT is very easy to think kindly of our neighbors: do they not supply us with an inexhaustible store of odious comparisons?



THE CARRIER OF THE GREAT BARROW SOCIAL PLAGUE

By Randolph Bartlett

I

D R. EVERETT SELWYN threaded his course through the tea-tables on the veranda of the Country Club. Georgina Graham noted his approach, noted his gravity of demeanor, noted that his scarf-pin had been jabbed rather viciously into place so that it did not punctuate with its accustomed nicety the convolutions of his tie. So she gracefully subtracted herself from the chatters and met him half way. They found an unoccupied table and sat down.

"I need your help again, Georgina," the doctor remarked.

"You didn't need to tell me," the sapient Georgina replied. "What is it now? Has Mrs. Harrison decided to have another attack of nervous prostration or does Mrs. Hollister want a fancy diagnosis for over-eating?"

"Much worse. Cicely Holton, my sister's only child, is coming to visit me."

"Oh!" The monosyllable expressed Georgina's understanding of the problem that had made the correct placing of a scarf-pin an insignificant matter.

"Yes. Alice is off to Florida and Cicely doesn't like the South, so they compromised and she is coming here."

"Can't you explain, and head her off?"

"The explanation would sound so silly, and would seem like an insult to Cicely, as well as a confession of my own helplessness. No—all we can do is take every precaution."

"Perhaps through Cicely we can get

at the bottom of the whole situation."

"A doctor never operates on his own relatives," Everett reminded her. "Frankly, I don't like it. The mere fact that the child has enough independence to stick out against going to Florida is bad, to begin with."

II

THE peril attending the visit of Cicely to her uncle was no less real to him because it could not be exactly stated, but rather more so. Vague apprehension interlaced the social fabric of Great Barrow's *elegantes* as a neglected basting thread marring the perfection of a gown otherwise immaculate. It was an apprehension that any individual of that splendid vicinage would have refused to define—would, in fact, have denied existence with that same heat in which the Californian disowns earthquakes, the Central American revolutions and the policeman vice crusades, vehemence being the megaphone of their fear.

So while Great Barrow, as a total of several hundred aristocratic souls, was silently tremulous with what-will-happen-nexts, the separate entities composing that colony, had they deigned to recognize the situation at all, would have melodized in unison, "Nothing can happen to us."

Indeed, it seemed preposterous to think of anything untoward happening in Great Barrow. The very plan of its existence had been evolved with such scrupulous care that Utopia might have voted itself slipshod by comparison. A few gentlemen with capital suf-

ficient for any purpose, and with motives high enough for magistrates as of Plato's ideal republic, had acquired a large tract of land and invited colonization by such families as could afford it, and could submit escutcheons unblemished socially and commercially. It was near, yet not of the city. It was a democracy of aristocrats, a commune of *élegantes*.

Into this rule of law anarchy had intruded. All the protective power of tradition and *savoir vivre* had been ineffective against certain manifestations of unrest. Had there been but one incident or two, Great Barrow might not have considered its ideals in peril. But the phenomena were recurrent and alarmingly frequent. Still, the habit of aristocracy, the conviction of self-sufficiency, is persistent, so Great Barrow trembled in silence, repudiating that which it could not explain.

As nearly as the menace could be stated in a phrase, it amounted to a revolt of the ingénues, an unvoiced declaration of independence by the *débütantes*.

Eleanor Harrison had eloped with a chauffeur, which was bad; married him, which was worse; and refused to leave her two-rooms-and-bath apartment in town to return to the parental chateau, which was unspeakable.

Mary Partenton had run away from home, and, having funds of her own, had set herself up in a studio and was studying some foolish kind of art.

Gladys Colville had ignored the obligations attending her engagement to Bernard Landville, and when pretending to go to the city on shopping trips, had been seen in public places dancing with obscure persons.

These were typical instances. There were many more of the same. When these nonconformist young persons were properly rebuked, they showed not the least sign of shame or repentance, nor would they give any promise of future circumspection. They would request their parents to wake up and

stop being mid-Victorian. Like Paul, they took pleasure in their infirmities, though possibly not for the same reason.

Dr. Selwyn was one of the few members of the colony who attempted to study the situation as a whole. Being an iron-gray widower with no children, he was able to think of it in impersonal terms. And being extremely wealthy, even for a fashionable physician, his services were constantly in demand by persons who could not afford to pay less than the most extortionate fees for the most trivial services. Thus he was the confidant of most of the Great Barrow families, especially when nervous prostration seemed the only decent step a *materfamilias* could take when disaster descended upon her household.

Contrary to precedent, he did not regard his responsibilities lightly, but sincerely desired to be of ultimate value to his community. Try as he would, however, card-indexing the escapades of the ingénues, he could discover no correlative facts leading to a central point of departure from conventionality. These little adventures in life annoyed him, not because he deplored them, but because he could not explain them. They were social phenomena in a circle with which he was intimately associated, and his scientific mind insisted that they must focus somewhere.

Even Georgina failed him—Georgina the dependable—Georgina who, it should be known, diagnosed most of the imaginary illnesses of Everett's patients, without even entering the sick-room. She was not quite thirty, and had not married, possibly because her sense of humor was too acute. When men tried to make love to her she always laughed at the wrong time, which is fatal to romance. But being beautiful in a clever way, and clever in a beautiful way, she was invariably popular. She possessed the rare faculty of agreeing with people in a manner that implied her conversion from an opposite opinion. Her own views she respected far too highly to scatter them broadcast among persons who could

not possibly appreciate them. If Georgina argued with you it was a sign of unmixed approval.

Yet Georgina was as completely mystified by the Great Barrow epidemic as her friend. She was a great favorite with the younger girls, and something of an oracle to them, and because she was so thoroughly correct this was encouraged by the mothers. But, intimately as she had known Eleanor Harrison, for example, that young person had never hinted at the possibility that she might elope with a chauffeur. So she frowned a little at the idea of Dr. Selwyn passing on to her responsibilities concerning his niece which he felt were too serious for him to assume in person. Consultation was one thing—taking full charge of the case was entirely different and undesirable. Yet she could see that this was what was in his mind, and protested.

"I know it's an imposition," he admitted, "but you see my dilemma. All I expect, of course, is that you will keep an eye on the girl, chaperone her in a way, and sift out any disturbing influences."

"Oh, is that all?" Georgina inquired with a laugh. "Well, I don't know why I should do this, but I will. I don't mind saying, though, that you're going to give me a bad time of it."

"Perhaps I can simplify it, or make it more interesting," the doctor said. "I have a new theory which, by process of elimination, seems the only logical one. Did you ever hear of disease carriers? Well, they are persons who simply radiate disease germs in every direction without having the malady themselves. People with whom they come in contact become infected, and a whole epidemic may result, while the cause of it all may be entirely innocent and unconscious of being the source."

"And you think the same thing may be possible socially?"

"Just that. Here we have a small community, carefully guarded against social infection, and yet here we have the epidemic. The cause must be lo-

cated in Great Barrow. If we find the carrier we solve the problem."

"If your niece were not involved the search would be fascinating. But I think I will just try to keep her insulated, and we'll do the hunting afterwards, when she has gone."

There seemed nothing more to be said, so they looked out over the beautifully manicured hills and listened to the gabble of par and bogie. Here were two score individuals to whom this exquisite landscape was nothing but a series of sunken tin cans into which one rolled a little rubber ball and passed hours bragging of the fact.

Everett felt that he and Georgina were strangely isolated, and wondered why this isolation, which had brought about a fine friendship, had never ripened into anything more deeply fixed in their emotions. He looked at her, she sensed his glance, and turning toward him, gazed a moment, and then laughed.

"Not by the moon, 'the inconstant moon,'" she chuckled.

"Georgina," the doctor declared impressively, "one of these times I'm going to find you in trouble, when you don't feel like laughing, and then I'm going to ask you to marry me."

"And when I can no longer laugh," Georgina stabbed back, "I'll marry a doctor."

III

A FEW days later Cicely arrived. With her first casual inspection Georgina approved and was distinctly relieved. Cicely was nineteen, simple and direct, but best of all, was innately aristocratic. Conscious superiority was written upon every act and word, the superiority that disdains snobbery and that does not need to hold itself aloof from anything or any person, because it is supremely convinced that it commands respect from others, having learned to respect itself. She was a slim Minerva.

Georgina's task assumed a more pleasant aspect than she had anticipated.

With this girl she could be more comrade and less chaperone. In Cicely she could see reflected a certain similarity to herself, which made the progress of friendship simple and natural. With much the same perspective they looked upon the shallow inconsistencies which comprise so great a proportion of the routine of existence, especially among the self-limited *elegantes*, and with the same gentle irony dissected friend and foe. To be with Cicely constantly for the month or two she was to visit her uncle no longer appeared in the light of a cold duty, but rather in that of a privilege. The task of guarding her from the Great Barrow plague was a labor of love.

They became intimate. They spoke much of themselves, finding the subjects more interesting than any other. They exchanged theories. They even asked each other searching questions.

"Why don't you marry?" Cicely asked Georgina one day, almost abruptly.

"Why should I marry?" Georgina replied, with a laugh.

"Because, just as Napoleon's grenadiers all carried marshal's batons in their knapsacks, every woman carries a wedding ring in her heart," Cicely persisted.

"Perhaps. It may be that I am suspicious of emotions. They either frighten or amuse me. Emotions prevent you from being yourself, from ruling your own existence. I've loved a man or two, in a way, and have had a good deal of trouble concealing the fact. But in the end I've been glad that I kept tight hold until the wave broke. Because in no case has the man been strong enough or intelligent enough to suit me in my saner moments."

"Then you don't believe in love?" Cicely asked.

Georgina looked up at the girl quickly. It was the first alarming note. But Cicely's voice was calm, and her glance steady. Georgina breathed again, and scolded herself for indulging in silly fear.

"I believe in so many kinds of love that I couldn't enumerate half of them. But there are a few kinds that I don't intend to indulge in, and they seem to be the only kinds that lead a man toward marriage. And the kind of men who are led in that way don't appeal to me as matrimonial possibilities."

"I see," Cicely mused. "You think a husband should be selected—not just accepted."

"Exactly. Consider his virtues when he is absent, and if he doesn't make you feel uncomfortable when he is present—take him."

Further discussion of the best manner of approaching marriage was interrupted by the arrival of the golf instructor. Georgina cared nothing for the game, but Cicely was anxious to learn. It was part of her boundless energy and curiosity about everything. Golf interested many people she knew, and she wanted to know why. So Georgina trailed along, nonchalantly poking her ball around the pasture, while Cicely concentrated upon the finer points of address and swing, accepting as a matter of course the respectful praise of the instructor. As Cicely became more and more adept, the game palled upon Georgina, and she begged off, watching indolently from the veranda as Cicely and her teacher made the round. One day the girl returned to the subject of marriage.

"I have been thinking over what you said about selecting a husband," she said, "and I believe you are quite right. Women are too prone to drift into marriage, or be swept into it on impulse. I shan't allow myself again to become interested in a man until my reason permits it."

Georgina was pleased. She felt that she had done her work well, that she had been able not merely to inoculate her friend's niece against the Great Barrow fever, but had, at the same time implanted in her a good, substantial philosophy of life that would be of vast service to her in future.

This gave her more time to think about herself, and she began to wonder

why it was she did not practice what she had been preaching. Following her own prescription, Dr. Selwyn would be a perfectly satisfactory husband, and she knew that the least encouragement would bring about a proposal. But there was that about him which aroused the strongest phases of her character and added to her feeling of self-sufficiency. She believed she would never marry anyone else, but could she ever so subordinate herself as to marry him? She could not understand why the question was so difficult, because she did not understand that, not yet having touched her emotions, he could not vitalize her principles and make them operative.

A week passed, a week of the pleasant placidity of self-contained Great Barrow, and then the crash came. One afternoon a great bulldog of a roadster snorted furiously up the doctor's driveway, insolently tearing at the finely-surfaced road and stopping at the door with a jerk and a screech of emergency brakes. A dusty youth hurled himself at the bell and shouted at the astonished maid:

"Where's Cicely?"

Selwyn heard the roar and came to reinforce the stammering girl.

"She's out just now," he said. "What's the trouble?"

"Where is she? I've got to see her at once, before it's too late," the youth blustered, while the maid discreetly withdrew.

"But, my dear young friend," the doctor said, calmly, "why all the excitement. Before what's too late?"

"Are you her uncle?"

"Yes."

"Then read this," and the youth produced a much-crumpled letter.

It was addressed to Mr. Charles Fanning, and informed him that all was over between them.

"I have found a most wonderful friend," Cicely wrote, "and she has convinced me that it is a great mistake to trust our emotions. You know, our friendship has been altogether too emotional. I am very fond of you—yes,

I am still—but I am determined that this shall not influence me in the least. I shan't allow myself again to become interested in a man until my reason permits it. And I may add that I am even now considering such a person. He is very fine and strong, and although he is not one whom my family might approve, I shall not permit that to influence me, as you may believe, when I cast aside the more important consideration of my emotional feeling for you."

The doctor could only gasp.

"What have you been doing with her?" Fanning demanded.

"Nothing," Selwyn protested. "That is to say, I haven't been seeing a great deal of her myself. I've been rather busy. But she's been in safe hands—er—well, that is to say—why, good God—*Georgina's the carrier herself!*"

"Carrier! What do you mean by the carrier?"

"Never mind. Come on in and brush up a bit. They'll—that is, Cicely'll be back soon. They—she's gone to some sort of tea fight. There's no immediate peril, my boy. My advice to you is to take a bath and be looking your best when she arrives."

The cyclonic car was trundled into the garage, and Selwyn led the anxious Fanning to the renovating department, to make himself presentable. The ardent youth admitted that he and Cicely were not exactly engaged, but that was because they did not believe Mrs. Holton would have agreed to any formal decision for a year or so, but it was taken as a settled thing.

"But who is this other man she writes about?" Fanning demanded.

"Haven't the least idea," Selwyn assured him. "It can't have progressed far, I'm certain."

IV

HE escaped from the perturbed youth and fled to his study. He wanted to be alone with his discovery. So it was Georgina who was planting the seeds of discord in the sacred fields of Great

Barrow. But how? The letter gave some clue, but still it was difficult to understand. He smiled as he nursed the thought that now he had reached the bottom of the mystery, though he had not completely analyzed it.

A little later Cicely arrived, and Georgina with her. Fanning stayed in the drawing room while the doctor imparted the news of his arrival.

"Oh, that's not fair," Cicely exclaimed. "He's spoiled everything."

"Tell him yourself," the doctor replied. "He's in there."

"I won't see him alone," she insisted. "You and Georgina must be present. Georgina, don't go back on me now. You won't, will you?"

"Why, certainly not, dear child," the wondering Georgina reassured her. "But what is it all about?"

The doctor looked sardonically at Georgina, and she returned his glance with utter bewilderment.

"It's just that I've been taking your advice about emotions," Cicely said plaintively.

"My advice! Good heavens! Have I been giving advice?" Georgina exclaimed.

"Apparently you have," said Selwyn, and led them to the impatient Fanning.

"Cicely!" the ardent youth shouted, and rushed toward the slim Minerva.

"Charley!" she half shrieked back at him, and met him half way.

"Plucky lot she cared for idols when I kissed her where she stood," the doctor intoned.

The demands of emotion having been temporarily satisfied, something else crept back into the memory of Fanning.

"But, Cicely," he demanded, holding her off at arm's length, "what's this about some other man?"

"Yes," the doctor added, "what have you two been up to?"

Cicely hung her head prettily.

"Well, when Georgina said we oughtn't to marry a man we loved—"

"I didn't say anything of the sort," Georgina interrupted, snappishly—for Georgina.

"Well, it was something like that, anyhow. So I began to think seriously about men and their qualifications, and the golf instructor was so clean and cultured and everything"—and Cicely's voice trailed off indefinitely.

Georgina rushed from the room, and would have been out of the house if Selwyn had not just managed to beat her to the door by a close decision.

"Well!" She looked up at him defiantly.

"Well, Miss Carrier, what have you to say for yourself!"

"All right—how do you know that the golf instructor isn't a better man for her than your handsome hero in there?" she demanded; but there was no conviction in her voice.

"Because you can't mix things up like that. Your idea is all right, but it needs digesting. The trouble is that you have been spreading it among young persons who haven't the perspective to see it in its true relation."

"You mean to say that girls should not be taught to think?"

"The first thing they should learn is that life is an art and art is form. If you go scrambling life indiscriminately, you get the same thing that you find in a Cubist painting—social dyspepsia—Georgina."

"Well." Her head drooped a little and the doctor put an arm around her shoulders.

"Will you marry me?"

Georgina was in no mood for laughter.



MUCH wisdom is needed to deal lightly with trivial things.

MUSIC AND COOKING

By Carl Van Vechten

IT is my firm belief that there is an intimate relationship between the stomach and the ear, the saucepan and the crotchet, the mysteries of Mrs. Rorer and the mysteries of Mme. Marchesi. It has even occurred to me that one of the reasons our American composers are so barren of ideas is because as a race we are not interested in cooking and eating. Those countries in which music plays the greater part in the national life are precisely those which are the most concerned with the culinary art.

The food of Italy, the cooking, is celebrated; every peasant in that sunny land sings and the voices of some Italians have reverberated around the world. The very melodies of Verdi and Rossini are inextricably twined in our minds around memories of *ravioli* and *zabaglione*. *Vesti la giubba* is spaghetti. The composers of these melodies and their interpreters alike cooked, ate and drank with joy, and so they composed and sang with joy, too. Men with indigestion may be able to write novels, but they cannot compose great music.

The Germans spend more time eating than the people of any other country (at least they did once). It is small occasion for wonder, therefore, that they produce so many musicians. They are always eating, mammoth plates heaped high with Bavarian cabbage, *Koenigsberger Klopps*, *Hasenpfeffer*, noodles, sauerkraut, Wiener Schnitzel, . . . drinking *seidel* of beer. They escort sausages with them to the opera. The women have their skirts honey-combed with capacious pockets in which

they carry substantial lunches to eat while Isolde is deceiving King Mark. Why, the very principle of German music is based on well-fed auditors. The voluptuous scores of Richard Wagner, Richard Strauss, Max Schillings and Co. were not written for skinny, ill-nourished wights. Even Beethoven demands flesh and bone of his hearers. The music of Bach is directly aimed against asceticism. . . .

Once in Munich, in a second-story window of the Bayerischebank, I saw a small boy, about ten years old, sitting outside on the sill, washing the panes of glass. Opposite him on the same sill a dachshund reposed on her paws, regarding her master affectionately. Between the two stood a half-filled toby of foaming Löwenbräu, which, from time to time, the lad raised to his lips, quaffing deep draughts. And when he set the pot down he whistled the first subject of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. On Sunday afternoons, in the gardens which invariably surround the Munich breweries, the mothers who gather to listen to the band play while they drink beer frequently replenish the empty nursing bottles of their offspring at the taps from which flows the dark brown beverage.

The food of the French is highly artificial, delicately prepared and served, and flavored with infinite art: *vol au vent à la reine* and Massenet, *petits pois à l'étuvé* and Gounod, *auf Ste. Clotilde* and César Franck, all strike the tongue and the ear quite pleasantly. . . . Hungarian goulash and Hungarian rhapsodies are certainly designed to be taken in conjunction. . . . Rus-

sian music tastes of *kasha* and *borstch* and vodka. The happy eaters of Russia, the drunken, sodden drinkers of Russia are all a part of "Boris Godunow" and "Petrouchka." But in America we import our cooks . . . and our music. As a race we do not like to cook. We scarcely like to eat. We certainly do not enjoy eating. We will never have a national music until we have national dishes and national drinks and until we like good food. It is significant that our national drinks at present are mixed drinks. It is doubly significant that that section of the country which produces chicken *à la* Maryland, cornbread, beaten biscuit, mint juleps, and New Orleans fizzies has furnished us with the best of such music as we can boast. Maine has offered us no "Suwanee River"; we owe no "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," to Nebraska. The best of our ragtime composers are Jews, a race which regards cooking of sufficient importance to have credited a treatise on eating to the authorship of God.

Most musicians and those who enjoy listening to music like to eat (this does not mean that people who like to eat always desire to listen to music at the same time, but nowadays one has little choice in the matter); what is more pregnant, most of them like to cook. We may include even the music critics, one of whom has written a book about such matters. . . . The others eat . . . and expand. Dinners are being given constantly for the musicians and critics to meet and talk over thirteen courses with wine. You may read Mr. Krehbiel's glowing accounts of the dinner to Adelina Patti (a dinner referred to in Joseph Hergesheimer's novel, "The Three Black Pennys") on the occasion of her twenty-fifth anniversary as a singer, the dinner to Marcella Sembrich on the occasion of her retirement from the New York opera stage, and a dinner to Teresa Carreño when the Venezuelan pianist proposed a toast to her "three husbands." . . .

Go to the opera-house and observe the lady singers with their ample bos-

oms and their broad hips, the men with their expansive paunches . . . and use your imagination. Why is it, when a singer is interviewed for a newspaper, that she invariably finds herself tired of hotel food and wants an apartment of her own, where she can cook to her stomach's content? Why are the musical journals and the Sunday supplements of the newspapers always publishing photographs of contraltos with their sleeves rolled back to the elbows, their Poiré gowns (carefully exhibited, nevertheless) covered with aprons, baking bread, turning omelettes or preparing clam broth Uncle Sam? You, my reader, may have seen these pictures, but it has perhaps not occurred to you to conjure up a reason for them.

If you can find a restaurant where opera singers and conductors eat you may be sure it is a good one. Follow Alfred Hertz, for instance, and you will be in excellent company in a double sense. Then watch him consume a plateful of Viennese pastry. If you have ever seen Emmy Destinn or Feodor Chaliapine eat you will feel that justice has been done to a meal. I once sat with the Russian bass for twelve hours, all of which time he was eating or drinking. He began with six plates of steaming onion soup (cooked with cheese and toast.) The old New Year's Eve festivities at the Gadski-Tauschers' resembled the storied banquets of the middle ages. Boars' heads, meat pies, *salade macédoine*, *cœur de palmier*, *hollandaise*, were washed down with magnums and quarts of Irroy, brut, 1900, Pol Roger, Chambertin, graceful Bohemian crystal goblets of Liebfraumilch and Johannisberger Schloss-Auslese.

Mary Garden once sent a jeweled gift to the chef of the Ritz-Carlton in return for a superb fish sauce which he had contrived for her. H. E. Krehbiel says that Brignoli "probably ate as no tenor ever ate before or since—ravenously as a Prussian dragoon after a fast." *Pêche Melba* has become a stable article on many menus in many

cities in many lands. In at least one restaurant *auf Toscanini* is to be found on the bill. I have heard Olive Fremstad complain of the cooking in this hotel in Paris, or that hotel in New York, or the other hotel in Munich, and when she found herself in an apartment of her own she immediately set about to cook a few special dishes for herself.

At least two musicians keep restaurants in New York. Each does the cooking in his own establishment. Bernard Bégué leaves his stove to sing at the Opera, but Giacomo Pogliani has deserted the bassoon for the *casserole*. Lillian Russell is a good cook. I can recommend her recipe for the preparation of mushrooms "Put a lump of butter in a chafing dish (or a saucepan) and a slice of Spanish onion and the mushrooms minus the stems; let them simmer until they are all deliciously tender and the juice has run from them—about twenty minutes should be enough—then add a cupful of cream and let this boil. As a last touch squeeze in the juice of a lemon." When Luisa Tetrazzini was going mad with a flute in our vicinity she varied the monotony of her life by sending pages of her favorite recipes to the Sunday yellow press. Unfortunately, I neglected to make a collection of this series.

You perhaps have heard rumors that Giuseppe Campanari prefers spaghetti to Mozart, especially when he prepares it himself. When this baritone was a member of the Metropolitan Opera Company his paraphernalia for preparing his favorite food went everywhere with him on tour. Heinrich Conried (or was it Maurice Grau?) once tried to take advantage of this weakness, according to an amusing story often related by the late Algernon St. John Brenon. Campanari was to appear as Kothner in "Die Meistersinger," a character with no singing to do after the first act, although he appears in the procession in the third act. The singer told the impresario that he saw no reason why he should remain to the end

and explained that he would leave his costume for a chorus man to don to represent him in the final episode.

"What would the Master say?" demanded Conried, wringing his hands. "Would he approve of such a proceeding? No. That would not be truth! That would not be art!" . . .

Campanari was obdurate. There was a silence and the Director became reflective.

"I'll tell you what I will do," he continued presently, "If you will stay for the last act you will find in your room a little supper, a bottle of wine, and a box of cigars."

In sooth when Campanari entered his dressing-room after the first act of Wagner's comic opera he found that the director had kept his word. . . . The singer ate the supper, drank the wine, put the cigars in his pockets—and went home!

If some singers are good cooks it does not follow that all cooks are good singers. Benjamin Lumley, in his "Reminiscences of the Opera," tells the sad story of the Countess of Cannazaro's cook, which should serve as a lesson to housemaids who are desirous of becoming moving-picture stars. "This worthy man, excellent no doubt as a *chef*, took it into his head that he was a vocalist of the highest order, and that he only wanted opportunity to earn musical distinction. His strange fancy came to the knowledge of Rubini, and it was arranged that a performance should take place in the morning, in which the cook's talent should be fairly tested. Certainly every chance was afforded him. Not only was he encouraged by Rubini and Lablache (whose gravity on the occasion was wonderful), but by a few others, Costa included, as instrumentalists. The failure was miserable, ridiculous, as everybody had expected."

Frederick Crowest describes a certain Count Castel de Maria who had a spit that played tunes "and so regulated and indicated the condition of whatever was hung upon it to roast. By a singular mechanical contrivance this

wonderful spit would strike up an appropriate tune whenever a joint had hung sufficiently long on its particular roast. Thus 'Oh, the roast beef of Old England,' when a sirloin had turned and hung its appointed time. At another air, a leg of mutton *à l'Anglaise* would be found excellent; while some other tune would indicate that a fowl *à la Flamande* was cooked to a nicety and needed removal from the fowl roast."

To Crowest, too, I am indebted for a list of beverages and eatables which certain singers held in superstitious awe as capable of refreshing their voices. Malibran believed in the efficacy of stout and there is a story of how a pot was handed up to her from behind a canvas rock while she was on the stage singing a rôle. Clara Louise Kellogg, in her very lively "Memoirs," tells a similar tale: "It was told of Grisi that when she was growing old and severe exertion told on her she always, after her fall as Lucrezia Borgia, drank a glass of beer sent up to her through the floor, lying with her back turned to the audience." Formes swore by a pot of good porter and Wachtel is said to have trusted to the yolk of an egg beaten up with sugar to make sure of his high Cs.

The Swedish tenor, Labatt, declared that two salted cucumbers gave the voice the true metallic ring. Walter drank cold black coffee during a performance; Southeim took snuff and cold lemonade; Steger, beer; Niemann, champagne, slightly warmed; Tichatschek, mulled claret; Rübgam drank mead; Nachbaur ate bonbons; Arabanek believed in Gampoldskirchner wine. Mlle. Brann-Brini took beer and *café-au-lait*, but she also firmly believed in champagne and would never dare venture the great duet in the fourth act of "Les Huguenots" without a bottle of Moët Crémant Rose. Miss Kellogg complains of the breaths of the tenors she sang with: "Stigelli usually exhaled an aroma of lager beer, while the good Mazzoleni invariably ate from one to two pounds of cheese the day he

was to sing. He said it strengthened his voice. Many of them affected garlic." It is necessary, of course, that a singer should know what foods agree with him. He must keep himself in excellent physical condition, and, especially on days when he is singing, he must touch no food that will not have the right effect. Small wonder that singers are superstitious on the subject.

Rossini, after he had composed "Guillaume Tell," retired. He was thirty-seven, a man in perfect health, and he lived thirty-nine years longer, to the age of seventy-six, yet he never wrote another opera, hardly indeed did he dip his pen in ink at all. These facts have seriously disconcerted his biographers, who are at a loss to assign reasons for his actions. W. F. Apthorp gives an ingenious explanation in "The Opera Past and Present." He says that after "Tell" Rossini's pride would not allow him to return to his earlier Italian manner, while the prospect of the hard work needed to produce more "Tells" was more than his laziness could stomach. . . . Perhaps . . . but it must be remembered that Rossini did not retire to his library or his music-room, but to his kitchen. The simple explanation is that he preferred cooking to composing, a fact easy to believe (I myself vastly prefer cooking to writing). He could cook *risotto* better than anyone else he knew. He was dubbed a "hippopotamus in trousers" and for six years before he died he could not see his toes, he was so fat. Sir Arthur Sullivan relates an anecdote which shows that Rossini was conscious of his grossness. Once in Paris Sullivan introduced Chorley to Rossini, when the Italian said, "*Je vois, avec plaisir, que monsieur n'a pas de ventre.*" Chorley indeed was noticeably slender. Rossini could write more easily, so his biographers tell us, when he was under the influence of champagne or some light wine. His provision merchant once begged him for an autographed portrait. The composer gave it to him with the inscription, "To my stomach's best friend."

The tradesman used this souvenir as an advertisement and largely increased his business thereby, as such a testimonial from such an acknowledged epicure had a very definite value. J. B. Weckerlin asserts that when Rossini dined at the Rothschild's he first went to the kitchen to pay his respects to the *chef*, to look over the menu, and even to discuss the various dishes, after which he ascended to the drawing-room to greet the family of the rich banker. Mme. Alboni told Weckerlin that Rossini had dedicated a piece of music to the Rothschild's *chef*.

Anfossi, we are informed, could compose only when he was surrounded by smoking fowls and Bologna sausages; their fumes served to inflame his imagination, to feed his muse; his brain was stimulated first through his nose and then through his stomach. When Gluck wrote music he betook himself to the open fields, accompanied by at least two bottles of champagne. Beethoven, on the contrary, seems to have fed on his thoughts occasionally, although there is evidence that he was not only a good eater but also a good cook! There is a story related of him that about the time he was composing the Sixth Symphony he walked into a Viennese restaurant and ordered dinner. While it was being prepared he became involved in thought and when the waiter returned to serve him he said, "Thank you, I have dined!" laid the price of the dinner on the table and took his departure. Grétry, too, lost his appetite when he was composing. There are numerous references to eating and drinking in Mendelssohn's letters. His particular preferences, according to Sir George Grove, were for rice, milk and cherry pie. Dussek was a famous eater and it is said that his ruling passion eventually killed him. His patron, the Prince of Benevento, paid the composer eight hundred napoleons a year, with a free table for three persons, at which, as a matter of fact, one person usually presided. A musical historian tells us that in the summer of 1797 he was dining with three

friends at the Ship Tavern in Greenwich, when the waiter came and laid a cloth for one person at the next table, placing thereon a dish of boiled eels, one of fried flounders, a boiled fowl, a dish of veal cutlets, and a couple of tarts. Then Dussek entered and made away with the lot, leaving but the bones!

Handel was a great eater. He was called the "Saxon Giant" as a tribute to his genius, but the phrase might have had a satirical reference to his enormous bulk. Intending to dine one day at a certain tavern, he ordered beforehand a dinner for three. At the hour appointed he sat down to the table and expressed astonishment that the dinner was not brought up. The waiter explained that he would begin serving when the company arrived. "Den bring up de tinner brestissimo," replied Handel, "I am de gombany."

Lulli never forsook the *casserolle*. Paganini was as good a cook as he was a violinist. W. T. Parke, in his "Musical Memoirs," tells a story of Weichsell, not too celebrated a musician, but the father of Mrs. Billington and Charles Weichsell, the violinist:

"He would occasionally supersede the labours of his cook, and pass a whole day in preparing his favorite dish, rump-steaks, for the stewing pan; and after the delicious viand had been placed on the dinner-table, together with early green peas of high price, if it happened that the sauce was not to his liking he has been known to throw rump-steaks, and green peas, and all out of the window, whilst his wife and children thought themselves extremely fortunate in not being thrown after them."

Is there a cooking theme in "Siegfried" to describe Mime's brewing? Lavignac and others who have listed the *Ring* motives have neglected to catalogue it, but it is mentioned by Old Fogy. Practically an entire act of "Louise" is taken up with the preparation and consumption of a dinner. There is much talk of food in "Hänsel und Gretel." Scarpia eats in "Tosca"

and the heroine kills him with a table knife. . . . There are drinking songs in "Don Giovanni," "Lucrezia Borgia," "Hamlet," "La Traviata," "Giroflé-Girofla." . . . The reference to whiskey and soda in "Madame Butterfly" is celebrated.

A young husband of my acquaintance once bemoaned to me the fact that his wife seemed destined to become a great singer.

"She is such a remarkable cook!" he explained.

I reassured him:

"She will cook with renewed energy when she begins to sing Sieglinde and Tosca. . . . She will practice *Vissi d'Arte* over the gumbo soup and *Du herstes Wunder!* while the Frankfurters are sizzling. Her trills, her chro-

matic scales, and her *messa di voce* will come right in the kitchen; she will equalize her scale and learn to breathe correctly bending over the oven. It is even likely that she will improve her knowledge of *portamento* while she is washing dishes. When she can prepare a succulent roast suckling pig she will be able to sing *Ocean, thou mighty monster!* and she will understand *Abscheulicher!* when she understands the mysteries of old-fashioned strawberry short-cake. If you hear her shrieking *Suicidio!* or evoking *Agamemnon* or appealing to the *Casta Diva* among the kettles and pots be not alarmed. . . . For the love you bear of good food, man, do not discourage your wife's ambition. The more she loves to sing, the better she will cook!"



CUTTING LOOSE

By Richard Van Tuyl

THE guests entered the room glumly and silently. Not a sound was heard and not a word spoken as they took their places. Only a muffled scraping of chairs arose as they seated themselves. The silence was depressing and unearthly—one could imagine that the room was peopled with ghosts. For perhaps a minute this taciturn state continued, then a deafening clamor arose. Soup was served.



RAIN

By Oscar C. Williams

THE bleary lights and the dark,
And the gleaming streets alone
With the little paths of gold
Over the paths of stone.

The bleary lights and the dark,
And something strange and bold
That tiptoed its way to my heart
By a little path of gold!

INFATUATION

By Ben Hecht

THE dolorous night peered Madonna-like into the open windows of the café. At the little round tables, their arms resting on the black lacquered tops, their fingers clinging forgetfully to the stems of glasses, sat groups of idle celebrants. The wail of the café orchestra lost itself in the night noises that drifted through the windows—the noises from the little summer lake below, the heavy patches of wood beyond and the amorous laughter of young men and young women walking across the darkened hotel lawns and congregated in the pavilion above the boat house.

Lucian Walters stared about him for a moment in the café, removing his eyes with difficulty from the curious creature who sat opposite him at one of the little black lacquered tables. The heavy brooding eyes of middle-aged women sitting stiff and immobile in all the pompous finery of their summer wardrobe encountered his. The lachrymose gaze of middle-aged men drifted by him to the opened windows and the alluring night. A sad lot, laughing now and then, talking aloud, humming the simple melodies of the orchestra, sipping at their glasses. A miserable company, vaguely frightened by the stiff little dreams that scratched timidly at their souls. Here and there a youthful couple, confronting each other with wine glasses in their fingers and sinning ruthlessly with their frantic eyes. The little artificial scene, so piquantly located in the midst of the solemn wilderness about them, faded again from Walters' thought. His eyes with a start focused back upon the curious creature opposite him at the little table.

She looked like a cross between a macaw and a marionette. Luxurious, perverse, artificial, she sat facing him and the night about her, a sort of savagery in caricature. Her face was like a sentence full of unexpected adjectives—startling and meaningless. The bodice of her dress—curiously folded purples, golds and lavenders—was reminiscent of the Salomé which Van Gogh never painted. Her skirt revealed no human lines, but spread about her in a flare of blue greens, ruffled and looped into the semblance of clumsy and exotic plumage. Her legs beneath its high hem stretched to the ground, straight and bird-like. They were encased in yellow silk embroidered with yellow rosettes above the ankles. They seemed the finely chiseled effort of some amorous goldsmith's art. The elaborated feet were stiffly corseted in little lyre-like amber-colored shoes.

Walters contemplated her darkly. In his contemplation was contained the doubt and self-disgust of a man who at the age of thirty-four discovers himself unreasonably, irrationally, unintelligently and hopelessly in love. Until five days ago he had regarded himself in the flattering light of a man of precocious sanity and unassailable humour. His sophistication in the matter of women had been one of his most cherished prides. He had during the course of numerous and intricate amours proved to his satisfaction certain axioms and paradoxes concerning the sex. And for a matter of eight years he had devoted himself to the writing of novels in which he had left no convention unturned and no illusion intact. To find himself thus, at the zenith of his prowess and the apex of his career, be-

wilderingly absorbed in the contemplation of a seventeen-year-old imbecile, a creature devoid of any known glimmering of intellect charm or cunning, was, accordingly, a matter which darkened his eye and filled him with deprecating oaths.

He contemplated now her hat. It was a challenge, a green and silver gesture flung across her copper-tinted hair. It rose obliquely from her left ear, to which was attached a large coral earring, and concluded with a piratical slant high over and beyond her opposite shoulder. It was incredible that the wearer of such a hat could be an imbecile—a persistent and indubitable imbecile. Strange and sinister thoughts were to be expected from such a hat as this—Borgian convulsions, Saturnalian philosophies. And yet he had determined since his arrival at The Dells five days ago that in all his life he had never encountered man or woman of such unwearying and spontaneous ignorance.

Lured to her by an inexplicable attraction, he had concentrated upon the creature, plumbed the shallows of her soul, vivisected her whims, turned her few pathetic mental processes inside out and submitted them to the microscopic eye of his widely renowned master mind. He was within two days of such activities prepared to pronounce her coldly and conservatively an imbecile, a vain, empty-headed, vacant-souled little flapper of the most unengaging type. And having determined this to the entire satisfaction of his critical mind, he had forthwith and insanely discovered her more alluring, more irresistible than any woman he had known during an intelligently sybaritic life.

The whine of the café orchestra dissipated his painful meditations into a curious mist. For moments he sat staring at the girl opposite him, repeating in his mind her name—"Myra Lanier." The silent syllables affected him magically. He abandoned himself with the intensity of an amateur drunkard to the business in hand and poured forth a

stream of love-sick inanities, amorous piffle. He was not more than half-conscious of his words. He recovered as the last violin note quavered into silence and the cold laugh of a breathless youth dashing about somewhere in the night rocketed into the café. A wave of supreme self-disgust overcame him. He turned miserably toward the open window, cursing to himself the orchestra, the wine he had consumed, the indescribable night and the creature who was fast making as fatuous and wholehearted an ass out of him as he had ever described in his own writings.

II

IN the name of the thousand and one gods of sanity and upright living, how had he come by this thing, and why? What latent streak of idiocy or hereditary taint of imbecility had brought him, open-mouthed, shining-eyed and giddy-headed at the feet of a vapid little peacock, and he thirty-four and the author of three discriminating volumes and a man of aloof and sensitive poise! He turned his embittered smile upon her face, one side of which was concealed as by a carefully painted shadow. It was an arresting, impressionistic face of stenciled features, poster tints, and provokingly immobile. There was visible only one of her eyes, one of her ears, one of her cheeks, an enigmatic section of her lips, and the whitened tip of her nose. It was not the face of an imbecile. Cleopatra would not have despised so mocking and esoteric a surface. And yet Walters' long fingers caressed nervously the stem of the tall conical glass before him. The memories of the past five days overwhelmed him with a loathing. The manner in which he had danced kittenish attendance upon her disgusting conquests! The manner in which he had. . . . Face or no face, the creature was an infant and a fool!

She sat with her elbows planted on the black lacquered top of the café table, her forearms in their tight lavender and gold sleeves tilted forward like em-

bracing and exotic serpents. Her palms were pressed together, the pink and waxen fingers interlaced. Her nails glistened like rubies on the backs of her hands. Her chin was lifted, her whitened throat presented a line of moonlight. Her bosom made two little ivory buckles above the purples, gold and lavenders of her bodice.

Walter observed these things cautiously, holding his emotions well in check. He wondered dimly just what he had said a moment ago that had so animated her usually expressionless face. The revulsion he was experiencing had become familiar to him during the five days of his infatuation. Hard upon moments of groundless intoxication similar revulsions had overtaken him. He seized upon them with a low sort of joy. They were respites, lucid, wonderful intervals during which he could most satisfactorily curse and belabor himself.

He sat now elate. What sort of a callow, poppycocking idiot was he becoming! Spending five days of his precious holiday bouncing along in the wake of this half-witted, giggle-cursed, insanely stupid and insanely clothed infant! Submitting himself to the insufferable horseplay and companionship of a pack of barely-weaned bull calves who were his rivals for the maiden's accursed favor! Five days of mental and spiritual suicide! What in the name of all the gods of fact and legend had come over him! Arguing hotly with a mess of sleek-haired, grinning-faced undergraduates! Circumventing them by imbecile ruses! Sinking to the loathsome level of impassioned baby talk! He, Lucien Walters! My God, the unmentionable idiocies, the horrifying banalities!

III

MYRA'S familiar high-pitched girl's voice came to him suddenly from across the table.

"I'm sorry," she was saying, "but I can't marry you. I'm only seventeen, y'know, and I don't want to marry yet."

She giggled. Walters waited stupidly for her to resume, moistening his lips and experiencing cold, blighting sensations in his stomach.

The giggle finished, Myra went on, suppressing with difficulty further and lustier giggles.

"You're really my first 'catch.' Nobody ever actually honest Injun proposed to me before and asked my hand in marriage."

The giggles had their delighted way for the moment.

"Won't mama be proud. She's always telling me that no serious man would ever ask me to be his wife. Just wait till I tell her that—that" . . .

Walters nodded his head solemnly as the object of his mad passion, overcome for the nonce by a strange and delicious mirth, choked, coughed and gurgled an interruption.

". . . that you did," she went on. "And nobody can say you ain't a serious man. Even mama, who is so particular about such things. Because you are serious, aren't you, Lucian?"

"Yes," said Walters.

"I knew it," cried the creature with an air of triumph. "I could tell."

Again Walters nodded his head solemnly. It was just as well that she wouldn't marry him. He would undoubtedly end by murdering her within a week if she did. And he had actually proposed! Well, perhaps this final evidence of his utter depravity would serve to shock him back into reason. My God, what an abominable voice! Would she never reach an end to this morbid chatter of hers? He stared at her desperately, half hearing her further remarks.

When she had finally ended a peculiar depression seized upon his spirit. The irrational impulses he had learned to dread as a victim of mania dreads the first approaches of his hallucination, were struggling back to life in his thought. Baffling, mysterious, luring, a creature of insidious and overpowering fascination—she sat confronting him.

He gazed at her miserably. His rapid

thoughts beat passionately about her, like drunken moths hurling themselves into flame. She was as mysterious and provoking as a colored hieroglyph staring from a Phoenician ruin. She became, as he gazed, something daintily barbaric, something not quite a woman but compounded of exotic mysteries. He waited an instant after she had finished.

"But you *must* marry me," he answered slowly. "I can't live without you. Don't you see?"

Thank God it was a safe topic! And it was the one topic on which she showed the remotest vestiges of intelligence. Hadn't she refused him! He stared about him at the stiff blurred figures lingering in the café, middle-aged women with heavy, brooding eyes, men with sad little secrets upon their faces. He would tear himself away. He had unquestionably stepped into some hideously enchanted atmosphere. He would pack his trunk and leave in the morning as early as possible. He was interrupted in his resolves by a series of explosive giggles.

"I'm so sorry. Really *so* sorry. If there's anything I can do . . ."

One of the hands that stared like a vacant little white head above the gold and lavender arm reached across the black table top and touched his wrist. He felt a chaotic elation. Even the falsetto of the unceasing giggle which accompanied the gesture of the hand upon his wrist was powerless to affect him. He surged and soared, freed at last from the cruelties of his self-disgust, his revulsion, his critical anguish.

"Myra," he murmured, his voice become hoarse and choked. A heavy hand thumped him between his shoulder blades. The space about him became suddenly filled with violent howls. He perceived as in a mist the sprawling figures of four youths—the Bull Calves, the sleek-haired and grinning-faced creatures of the Dance Pavilion—his rivals! They were jumping around the table, hurling insults, convulsed in abominable laughs. One of them

started singing the Wedding March from "Lohengrin." Another struck the attitude of an outraged parent and launched into a mock tirade against his "darter's elopement."

Walters became conscious of the faces of his neighbors at the little tables. They were turned toward him, scowling, smiling appreciatively, laughing coarsely.

He staggered to his feet, extricated himself from the violent and horrible group that clustered about him and dashed headlong from the café. In his ears trailed the words, "We seen yuh-gosh ding it! We caught yuh!" And the joyous, hysterical laugh of a woman—Myra.

He reached the hotel after colliding fiercely with a forest of trees and barking his shins on a maze of croquet arches. Fronting the wide steps he ceased his plunging and pulled himself together. He mounted the steps with dignity. It was barely possible that his shame had not preceded him and that the horrible scene in the café—why it was horrible he was unable to explain—was still unknown to the rocking-chair brigade on the dark veranda. He passed into the lobby without creating any further disturbance. A few minutes later he sat in his room overlooking the tops of vague and innumerable trees and the glint of the little lake below. He would pack at once and be off as early as possible.

And for the hundredth time in five days Lucian Walters contemplated himself and marveled. He wasn't in love. He had contracted a disease—a furious malady which had already unseated his reason and changed him from a shrewd, discriminating gentleman into an infatuated and imbecile schoolboy.

He undressed and lay in his bed, helplessly bewildered. Images of Myra floated before his weary eyes, Myra astride gorgeous-hued peacocks, Myra dancing before ivory idols, Myra riding in state upon elephants attended by himself in the guise of a bejeweled and wonderfully tuniced rajah. Her face, exaggerated in his fancies, became the

mask of a priestess before the altars of Astarte.

He abandoned the notion of packing. He was in love. He had never been in love before. It was the fatuous whim of the gods who preside over such things to see that he should fall in love with a chattering, giggle-cursed, empty-headed imbecile seventeen years old. It was perhaps a divine punishment for his pride and prejudice in such matters.

He cursed, he tossed. And finally, as a silence settled upon the hotel and the wood noises racketed mysteriously outside, he fell asleep.

IV

It was early morning when Walters opened his eyes. He felt he had been violently drunk the night before. He remembered that he had asked Myra to marry him while sitting in the café. He sat up and experienced a sensation of emptiness in his heart. He remembered then that she had refused.

An hour later he had finished his breakfast and was walking mournfully about the gossip-echoing veranda. Men and women nodded with mysterious geniality at him.

"All the world loves a lover," he murmured grimly to himself.

He passed on to the lawn. He was, although not yet admitting it, heading for the boat house and the bathing pier. He had during the five previous days painfully absented himself from this spot. Here the Bull Calves and Myra were wont to disport themselves during the forenoon, to splash water upon each other and leap and dive about. Being unable to swim and a man of peculiar sensitiveness in such matters, Walters had remained away.

He walked now with measured steps toward the flight of stairs that led to the foot of the hotel hill down to the bathing pier. Two or three figures were already on the scene. Myra and her companions had not yet arrived, however. He sauntered down the stairs in the grip of ungovernable impulses.

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To himself he repeated with the resignation of a suttee martyr. "What's the use? I'm in love. Why not own up? I can't escape it."

He arrived on the pier and sat down on a stone bench against the railing. Two feminine figures clothed in long capes appeared. His heart leaped toward them, and then leaped back again. Neither was Myra. They removed their long capes and stood two shapely figures in their tight-fitting bathing suits.

Walters turned wearily away. His career was ruined. He would let this ungovernable infatuation run its course. He would overcome the creature and marry her. A damn fool and venomous destiny had ordained it. There was no escaping the inexplicable lure, the morbid fascination the imbecile exercised over him. Even now, as he sat and waited, his heart drummed in his ears and his head whirled.

Another figure was descending the flight of steps down the hill. It was Myra, her copper-tinted hair concealed beneath a violently green rubber cap, her figure hidden under a long voluminous cape. She approached down the pier and, spying him, came running to his side with the effected daintiness of a creature unaccustomed to bare feet.

"Going in? Oh, go get your things off. Come on. All the boys'll be here in a minute."

Walters cleared his throat twice and endeavored a remark. It failed. She was about to remove the voluminous cape. He stared brazenly, powerless to think or to conceal his emotion. With a mincing little step the creature separated herself from her single garment and stood before him, a slim, white-skinned girl, lithe-legged, lean-bodied, reed-throated. Under his gaze a blush crept into her cheeks.

Suddenly, as if awakened from a dream, Walters sprang to his feet, laughing. He walked without comment up the pier, turning once or twice to stare at the bewildered, shining figure of the girl. He mounted the stairs, chuckling and shaking his head.

His brain seemed cleared of some

horrible fume. He murmured to himself:

"What a funny kid! What a funny kid! Good Lord, I've been insane. I've been madly, horribly in love with a purple and gold dress and a green hat. Yes, sir. God, what a plot! What a plot!"

The widely renowned brain of Lucien Walters exercised itself nimbly. Coldly and without a tremor it recalled the image of Myra in her rutilant fabrics, garlanded and festooned in amazing colors—the dress with its unhuman lines, the curiously folded bodice of purples, golds and lavenders, the green and silver hat, the yellow stockings, the amber-colored shoes.

"A sort of savagery in caricature," he muttered carefully—for 'the sorrows of life must ever be the joys of art.' A

beauty that didn't reach to the skin. Mystery exotics, enigmas—born in a dressmaker's shop."

He turned on top of the hill and gazed toward the pier. There, dipping her toes coquettishly into the placid water of the lake, stood slightly inclined the scantily-clothed figure of Myra Lannier. Walters smiled and nodded his head with vigor.

"What did I expect to see?" he abruptly questioned himself. "Something, something unimaginable? Not a bad-looking kid at that. A little too scrawny. . . ."

He moved on, placing a cigarette between his lips.

"I'll call the story simply, 'Infatuation,'" he announced abruptly to the trees, "and let them draw their inferences."



INTERRUPTION

By Anita Allen

SHE lay in the hammock. Once more she saw the dark, tall, tanned hero press a kiss on the heroine's willing lips. She closed her eyes, felt the embrace, sighed.

The front gate clicked. She shut her novel crossly. Her husband came up the walk. He was blond, short, pale.

"I have a headache," she said.



THE saddest thing about marriage is not that there are so many *mesalliances*, but that so many of its victims consider themselves lucky.



YOUNG love is just as pleasant to enjoy, and just as painful to recall, as plum-pudding for breakfast.



MAKING love to a sentimental woman is like reading a bad love poem printed entirely in capitals.



MEN used to buy their wives; now they merely lease them.

OUTCLASSED*

A MELODRAMATIC COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By Carl Glick

CHARACTERS

GEORGIE SMITH, *alias* KIT, THE TERRIBLE SURE SHOT.

EDDIE SIMMONS, *alias* JIP, THE BLOOD.

MR. DODGE, a Baptist Sunday School teacher.

A TRAMP.

The Scene is the interior of a barn you all know—if you were born in a small American city. Tonight it does service as a den for a couple of desperate Western outlaws.

The curtain rises, discovering George, a good boy under ordinary circumstances, but tonight disguised as an outlaw. He is dressed to fit the part—a handkerchief around his neck, last winter's hat pulled over his eyes. The scene is lighted by two candles placed in bottles. It is evening, about seven o'clock. George, or KIT, THE TERRIBLE SURE SHOT, as he is known tonight, is placing an empty bottle on the box that serves as a table. He fastens a string to the bottle. Then he looks around for another bottle. Finding none, he sighs. Then he reaches into his pocket and draws out a flask half-full of licorice water. This he drinks as if it were the rawest whiskey. Then he places the empty flask beside the other bottle and fastens it also with a string. Turning away, he takes a few steps to the left, still holding the strings. For a moment he is strangely indifferent. Then from his pocket he draws a water-pistol and, with a quick turn, shoots.

KIT

(*Angrily.*) You little son of a gun! (He pulls the string and the bottle falls to the floor.) I'll get you and your pardner, too. Talk back to me, will you! (He fires again, and the flask falls, shot through and through.)

[Then the ferocious outlaw, very much pleased and with a modest swagger, goes calmly over to the bench at the left, and completely ignores his two victims. There is a knock at the door. Kit pulls his hat over his eyes, assumes a cautious attitude and waits. Then come three, slow, mysterious

knocks. Kit answers with three. Then three more. This time Kit answers with one. Then he drops behind the bench, covers the door with his pistol and waits.]

KIT

(*Roughly.*) Come in!

[The door is opened and Eddie slips into the barn. He, too, is a desperate outlaw. At least Eddie tries hard to be one. He is dressed somewhat as Kit, although he lacks the finishing touches of the perfect artist. JIP THE BLOOD, as he is known, is the

* All rights of performance reserved.

kind that follows. But then we can't all be leaders.]

KIT

Throw up your hands!

JIP

Don't shoot. It's only me.

KIT

Huh! Think I'm afraid of you? Well, come in, and close the door after you.

JIP

Georgie, they're after us!

KIT

My name ain't Georgie. My name is KIT, THE TERRIBLE SURE SHOT. And always call me that. (*Bravely.*) *Who's after us?*

JIP

Mr. Dodge.

KIT

Think I'm afraid?

JIP

No. But I am.

KIT

Lily-livered rat!

JIP

But I heard them talking over at the post-office. Mr. Dodge was there, and Reverend Taylor came in, and Mr. Clemens, the sheriff.

KIT

Who are they to be afraid of? The preacher, a darn old Sunday School teacher, and a sheriff! Ain't we a couple of outlaws that don't know fear?

JIP

I know. But Reverend Taylor says, "Dodge, there's been a bit of villainy done. The candle-sticks have been stolen from the altar of the church." "Terrible," says Mr. Dodge. "Who do you suppose has done it?" And then they both looked right at me.

KIT

And what did you do?

JIP

I just looked the other way and coughed so they wouldn't think it was me. Then Mr. Dodge says, "Well, I guess I know who's done it all right. And if we catch them, they'll hang for it. Won't they, Mr. Clemens?" And Mr. Clemens said, "Sure as my name is Clemens. It's time we was putting a stop in this here town to this unlicensed crime." Then I left. Kit, let's take them back. They suspect us, I tell you.

KIT

Say that louder!

JIP

(*Amazed.*) Louder?

KIT

Yes! Louder!! You act as if you was ashamed of being suspected. You're frightened about it. I'm proud I stole the candle-sticks off the altar of their old church. (*Shouting.*) Let them suspect *me*. I wish they would. They've got a right to.

JIP

(*Turning pale.*) Kit!

KIT

Sure. They've got a right to suspect us. We did it, didn't we?

JIP

Sh!

KIT

Yes. Let 'em. We are the ones who stole their old candle-sticks all right. You and me. You watched outside, and I got 'em. We'll show them that we can do as we darn please. And I ain't ashamed of stealing them either. And what's more, we've got them here in this very cabin. (*Goes to left, and from behind the hay pulls out two candle-sticks.*) And here they are.

JIP

If they should see us have them!

KIT

(*Growing more reckless and bold.*) That's just what I want them to. (*Puts the candle-sticks away, and covers them up.*) Ain't no use in being a bad man unless people know about it. We've started on a life of crime, and I'm glad. I'm proud of my dirty deeds. I can't be happy unless I'm known in this community as the slipperiest, slickest, toughest, wildest, and worstest desperado around. I want all the women and all the Sunday School teachers to be afraid of me.

JIP

But if they should catch us?

KIT

I'm ashamed of you. Ain't you got any ideals? What do you want to be, a sissy and play with the girls, and go to Sunday School? We're done with that life now. From now on you and me is outlaws of the worst kind. No more Sunday School, no more having to have our faces washed, and no more having to say "Please" and "Thank you." We can swear now.

JIP

(*Very much shocked.*) Georgie!

KIT

Don't call me "Georgie." Here's gratitude! I promised to let you go with me and join my band, and make you the terror of the whole county. And when they shoot me dead—as I suppose they will some day—you'll go on and be the leader of my gang. What's the matter, don't you want to be a desperate Western outlaw?

JIP

(*Not at all impressed, but willing to assist—some.*) Ye-e-ss. I want to be an outlaw all right. But I don't want to get caught.

KIT

You're like all the other outlaws. Ain't got no ideals. Just take it from me. They're ain't many men who can

steal candle-sticks from the church and get away with it.

JIP

But I wish you'd take 'em back just the same. It seems to me we can play being outlaws and do lots of bloody, desperate deeds without stealing anything, and doing criminal things.

KIT

Who ever heard of a criminal that didn't do criminal things?

JIP

But if ma should find out what you and me—

KIT

You ain't got no mother—nor sisters—nor relations of any kind. You're a desperate Western outlaw called JIP THE BLOOD, and you're hiding in a den on the Western plains, trying to escape justice.

JIP

(*Growing gradually weaker.*) I know. And I like to play with you, and I'm awfully glad I'm a desperate Western outlaw—but I do wish you'd let me take the candle-sticks back. You didn't hear 'em like I did, talking about it. I guess you wouldn't be nearly so brave if you knew what they said, and the way they looked.

KIT

Now see here. Are you going to play, or ain't you? We ain't never got in any trouble yet. Not even that time when we was kidnappers. No. Nor the time when we played firemen and set the barn on fire. We'll get out of it some way. All you've got to do is just imagine, and it always comes out all right. Now (*brandishing the "revolver"*), are you going to play, or ain't you?

JIP

Oh, I'll play all right.

KIT

That's good. Then you do as I tell

you always, and you'll never get caught. We can defend this cabin against the sheriff and his posse for days. We're well provisioned. I've got some cake and some cookies in there, and we can withstand a siege of several weeks.

JIP

Then give me a drink of licorice water, and I'm your man.

KIT

There ain't any more licorice water.

JIP

You've drank it all up!

KIT

I know. I've got such a terrible thirst. But we'll make some more tomorrow, and you can have the first drink.

[There is a knock at the door, a firm, decided knock. The boys look at each other. Jip loses all his courage at once. Kit pulls his hat over his eyes and looks "desperate."]

JIP

That's him, Mr. Dodge. What did I tell you?

KIT

You baby! Don't let on. We'll fool him. We've got to play the game through to the bitter finish.

JIP

I'm scared.

KIT

You're a fine desperado! You ought to be playing dolls with the girls. *(Swaggers.)* I ain't afraid of no Sunday School teachers, not even if they bring the sheriff with 'em!

[Again the knock at the door.]

JIP

Are you going to let him in?

KIT

Sure. Come in! Come in!

[The door is pushed open and Mr. Dodge enters. He looks around with

something of a smile on his face. Jip retreats to a corner. Kit swaggers up to Dodge and holds out his hand.]

KIT

Come on in, stranger. Glad to see you.

DODGE

Thank you. And who are you?

KIT

We're a couple of desperate outlaws. I'm KIT, THE TERRIBLE SURE SHOT, and this is my pal, JIP, THE BLOOD.

DODGE

I see. And this place?

KIT

This is our den. And who are you, stranger?

DODGE

(After a slight pause, with a smile.) Oh, I'm just the sheriff of this here county.

KIT

I see. And what brings you out this time of night?

DODGE

Business. I'm looking for a thief.

KIT

(Not daunted.) Just what was the thief like that you was looking for?

DODGE

(Looking at KIT closely.) Short . . . thin . . . black hair . . . face that needs washing . . . tough . . . wild and desperate looking.

KIT

(Wisely.) I see.

DODGE

I thought at first that you might be the thief I was looking for. But I guess I must have been mistaken.

KIT

(Relieved.) Yes. I guess you must be.

DODGE

You're nothing, I take it, but a couple of Western outlaws. And everyone knows they never steal.

KIT

(*Surprised at this bit of disappointing information.*) Is that so? But then we are desperate men. My pal over there is terrible bad at times.

DODGE

(*Looking at Jip.*) I can see that by looking at him.

[JIP tries to grow smaller and escape observation.]

KIT

What did this thief do that you are looking for?

DODGE

(*Suppressing a smile.*) He stole the candle-sticks from the altar of the church.

KIT

(*Painfully sympathetic.*) Dear me! That's too bad. The candle-sticks off the altar of the church! That is terrible. He must have been an unusually desperate criminal. Haven't you any idea who the thief was?

DODGE

Yes. (*Looks at Kit.*) We have an idea all right.

[JIP falls off the chair he is sitting on.

KIT glares at him and tries to look unconcerned.]

KIT

That's good. He must have been an awful bad man to steal candle-sticks from the altar of a church.

DODGE

I can see from the way you talk that you go to church.

KIT

There you have made a mistake, Sheriff. I never go to church. I ain't a Christian. I ain't never been a Christian.

DODGE

Dear me! You are worse than I first suspected. Don't you ever even go to Sunday School?

KIT

(*Bragging.*) No. I ain't never going to Sunday School no more. (*But DODGE does not offer a reply. So KIT grows bolder.*) Me and my pal ain't ever going to Sunday School again.

[JIP falls off his chair the second time.

KIT looks at DODGE, expecting an outburst of some sort. Why be a desperado if you can't advertise the fact and shock a few people? But DODGE replies with the unexpected.]

DODGE

I guess you are right. A fellow can't be a desperado and a Sunday School pupil at one and the same time.

KIT

(*Cautiously.*) What'll they do with the thief when they catch him? Will they hang him?

DODGE

Dear me, no. That's out of fashion. Why kill all our bad men? What use would we have of the police and the lawyers. But then you probably don't understand that. They don't hang thieves any more. They just perform operations of different kinds upon them—and that cures them.

KIT

(*Learning something new every day.*) Operations?

DODGE

Yes. They cut off their hands—or feet—and in cases like this—probably their ears!

[JIP groans.]

KIT

I didn't know they did things like that.

DODGE

Oh, yes. However, if the candle-

sticks are back on the altar in time for the service Sunday morning, nothing at all will be said to the thief. Personally, I don't care if they are not put back. Some of the congregation don't like them very well as it is. They think we got cheated on them. We were told that they were solid brass when we bought them—but I think they are cast iron.

KIT

Then you don't think it is such a bad thing to steal candle-sticks from the altar?

DODGE

Since you pin me down in this fashion, I'll have to admit that I don't. Lots of people steal things from the church. Just ask your father. That is, if you have one. But, being a warden, it is my duty to see that the candle-sticks are replaced, if possible. And that's why I should like to see them there Sunday morning as usual. If the town knew they were missing it might cause a lot of unpleasant comment, and I wouldn't be surprised but what someone might accuse me of taking them. Well, KIT and JIP, I guess I'll be going on. If you should happen to see the thief, just tell him that I said if the candle-sticks are back on the altar in time for the service Sunday, nothing will be said or done about it. (*Rises and crosses left.*) This is a nice den you have here.

KIT

We like it.

DODGE

(*Moves over to where the candle-sticks are.*) I suppose you have lived here for years?

KIT

Yes. Forty of them by now.

DODGE

(*Sees a glitter of brass hidden among the hay.*) H'm. Certainly an interesting place.

KIT

(*Nervous.*) The door is over this way, Sheriff.

DODGE

Oh, yes. Thank you. (*Rubs against the hay, and the candle-sticks fall out. He picks them up.*) What are these?

KIT

(*Innocently.*) Those? (*Then with all the bluff and bravery he can muster.*) They look like candle-sticks to me. (*Then he waits for the blow to fall.*)

[JIP becomes suddenly limp.]

DODGE

(*Slowly.*) Yes. They look like candle-sticks all right. (*After a pause.*) I thought for a moment they were the ones stolen from the altar. But I see now that they aren't. The ones from the church are not nearly as heavy as these. (*He puts them back and covers them with hay.*) Well, I guess I'll go on with my search after the thief. If you fellows see him, just tell him what I said about nothing being done if they are back by Sunday morning. (*With an elaborate bow.*) Well, good-night KIT, THE TERRIBLE SURE SHOT and JIP, THE BLOOD.

[DODGE exits by the door at the back. The boys stare at each other amazed.]

JIP

Oh, Georgie, what did I tell you?

KIT

(*Puzzled, and covering his lack of knowing what to do under silence. He has the makings, it will be seen, of a first-class politician.*) Huh!

JIP

Let's take them back right away. You know what he said.

KIT

Take them back! What do you think I am?

JIP

But he knows we've got them.

KIT

Are you sure he knows those are the candle-sticks? He ain't certain.

JIP

But he could have arrested us—and what would you have told him?

KIT

He didn't dare arrest us. He saw my hand on my revolver all the time. If he did recognize those as his old candle-sticks, he was too scared to say so. (*With increasing excitement.*) He may go after a posse and then come back. That's his game. We've got to get ready. It looks to me like there was going to be a terrible fight right here. But we can defend this cabin against all the men in the state.

JIP

I wish you'd let me take them back.

KIT

You're the weakest desperado I ever saw. Think Jesse James would have had you in his gang? Just when you are a success and begin to show people that you ain't afraid of them, you want to take them back. Gosh, you make me sick. We're successful thieves, I tell you. I've got a good notion to try taking something from the store. There's an awful lot of licorice that they'd never miss.

JIP

(*Desperate at last, but in a different way.*) But I don't want to lead a life of crime. (*He goes and gets the candle-sticks.*) I'm going to take them back before it's too late.

KIT

You big baby! (*He tries to take the sticks away from JIP. The boys struggle.*)

[*Again comes the noise from outside. JIP in his fright gives up the struggle. KIT takes the candle-sticks and puts them away.*]

KIT

The posse! We are surrounded. It is a fight to the death now.

[*The door at the back opens carefully and a tramp makes his appearance. He comes into the barn, looking carefully around.*]

KIT

(*Making good use of his "revolver."*) Put up your hands!

TRAMP

(*For the moment badly frightened.*) Oh, boss. I ain't done nothing.

KIT

Put up your hands!

[*The tramp puts up his hands, and stands at the back, puzzled and disturbed.*]

TRAMP

Well, I've got 'em up.

KIT

Come here.

[*The TRAMP moves down front, still keeping up his hands. When he gets into the light and sees the boys his amazement grows.*]

TRAMP

Oh, gee! Nothin' but a couple of kids. (*He puts down his hands.*)

KIT

We ain't. We're desperate Western outlaws. Put up your hands.

TRAMP

(*Putting up his hands again.*) Don't point that thing at me, you darn little rummy. It might accidentally go off.

KIT

Tell us who you are.

TRAMP

I'm a Socialist.

KIT

What's them? Do they believe in crime?

TRAMP

(*Shifting feet.*) Do you?

KIT

That's our secret.

TRAMP

Say, bo, I don't mind you pretending you're a desperate outlaw, but I wish you'd turn that gun the other way. I don't mean no harm. I wouldn't hurt you kids.

KIT

Will you join our gang?

TRAMP

I'll do anything you want me to. But turn that gun the other way. You make me nervous.

KIT

You mean you are afraid of a revolver?

TRAMP

Not when I've got a hold of it. Give me a gun, and I could hold off the best cop in the world.

KIT

Then you don't like policemen, either—or sheriffs?

TRAMP

The law and me ain't any too good friends.

KIT

(Putting up the revolver.) Shake, partner. We're fugitives from justice, too. I'm KIT, THE DESPERATE OUTLAW OF THE PLAINS, and this is my pal, JIP, THE BLOOD.

TRAMP

(Laughing.) Glad to know you. I've heard of your friend here, but I never expected to meet him. Where do you kids live?

KIT

Here. This is our den. We ain't got a home.

TRAMP

Really?

KIT

Really. Not many know it though. We've got the whole neighborhood scared of us.

TRAMP

(Almost convinced.) But what do you do for a living?

KIT

Steal, mostly.

TRAMP

You don't mean it!

KIT

Sure! Want to see our latest haul? *(Gets the candle-sticks, and brings them out.)* These. We got them from the church across the way.

TRAMP

Well, I'll be blowed! I thought you was kiddin' me at first.

KIT

I guess you believe me now, don't you? How would you like to go in with me and my pal? I bet you could tell us some stories about a life of crime.

TRAMP

I ain't much in telling stories.

KIT

Did you ever kill a man?

TRAMP

(Rises, startled.) What did you say?

KIT

I said, did you ever kill a man?

TRAMP

Say, I don't like your line. You're altogether too personal. But either I'm having a nightmare or I'm in clover. Did you kids really mean what you said about making your living stealing?

KIT

Sure. Think I'd lie to you? We even steal our food from the houses about here.

TRAMP

But don't people get hep?

KIT

Well, you see our fathers and mothers are both dead. They want to send us to an orphan asylum, but we slipped away and hide here.

TRAMP

I thought you said you was outlaws?

KIT

Being orphans don't prevent us from being outlaws, does it?

TRAMP

I begin to understand. How long have you been hiding here?

KIT

About a week now, ain't it, JIP?

JIP

Ye-e-ss.

[KIT strolls over to JIP.]

KIT

Why don't you say something?

JIP

Oh, Georgie. I wish you wouldn't tell such lies!

KIT

You make me sick. Here's a chance for a real adventure.

TRAMP

(Who has been examining the candle-sticks, and has not heard the dialogue which went on in the corner.) Listen, bo. Are you telling me the straight goods?

(Returning.) Sure.

TRAMP

About being orphans, and hiding here?

KIT

Sure!

TRAMP

(Carefully.) Suppose that I put it up to you to help you get away from here.

KIT

We've been waiting for a chance.

TRAMP

(Lowering his voice to a whisper.) If you kids will help me out on a little deal, I'll see to it that by tomorrow morning you're a hundred miles away—and then no orphans' home for you.

KIT

(Joyously.) It's a go with me.

JIP

(Pulling at his coat.) Oh, Georgie, don't!

TRAMP

I know of a chance to make a big haul tonight. Get me?

KIT

(His eyes big.) Sure.

TRAMP

You boys help me, and we'll split fifty-fifty. Are you in?

[The boys stare at each other. Even now KIT is beginning to remember his home training.]

KIT

Are you really in earnest?

TRAMP

Dead level. I know how we can make a crack at the safe in the store. I was by there this afternoon.

JIP

You mean take money from the safe?

TRAMP

One of you watch outside, and I'll do the trick. There ain't nothing to it in these country stores.

KIT

You've done it before?

TRAMP

I ain't saying. But if you kids is game!

JIP

(Losing all his nerve at once.) I'm

going home, Georgie! *(He starts for the door.)*

TRAMP

What does he say?

JIP

I ain't going to be no thief!
[The tramp catches him and brings him down front.]

TRAMP

Are you stringing me? I half suspected as much. So you've got a home?

JIP

Yes. And we ain't orphans, and we ain't even outlaws. We're just playing! Let me go. Ouch!

(Releasing him.) Well, you put it over. I might have known better. But these candle-sticks?

JIP

We took them all right. But it's the first time we ever stole anything. It was Georgie's idea. He didn't want to go to Sunday School any more. I wish I had never played outlaws with you, Georgie.

KIT

(Who has been standing at the left, watching JIP with disgust.) He ain't got no nerve, nor imagination, nor nothing!

TRAMP

(Picking up the candle-sticks.) Well, kids. Have a good time while you are at it. And thanks for these candle-sticks.

KIT

(Forgetting all about Western outlaws.) What are you going to do with them?

TRAMP

Take them as my share. I might have known you kids was only stringing me. *(He starts for the door.)*

JIP

I told you we should have put them back!

KIT

(Experiencing a strange emotion. Being the oppressed member of a society that makes one go to Sunday School, and the protector of that society's property are two attitudes that are strangely like one. The habits of even a fourteen-year-old lifetime will tell in moments of crisis.) What are you doing with our candle-sticks?

TRAMP

You'll find out tomorrow.
[And to Kit's credit be it that he gives a flying leap and lands on the tramp's neck just as he is about to leave the barn. They go down to the floor in a heap. The candle-sticks drop from the tramp's hands.]

TRAMP

You little devil!
[KIT is kicking and pounding with all his might.]

KIT

Take 'em, JIP. Take 'em!
[JIP manages to get the candle-sticks and makes a rapid exit through the door.]

TRAMP

Let go of me.

KIT

You'll take our candle-sticks, will you?
[Dodge appears in the door. He comes in slowly.]

DODGE

What's the racket? *(He separates the TRAMP and KIT.)*

[The TRAMP rises from the floor, rubbing his elbows and looking dazed and bewildered.]

TRAMP

I ain't done nothing, boss. I was just having some fun with the kids.

DODGE

What's the trouble, KIT?

KIT

(*Trying to look unconcerned.*) Nothing.

[*The tramp starts to go.*]

DODGE

(*Seizing him by the collar.*) Wait a minute. (*He sees that the hay around the hiding-place of the candle-sticks has been disturbed.*) Was he trying to take the candle-sticks?

KIT

What candle-sticks?

DODGE

Where are they?

[*JIP appears at the door, smiling, although still somewhat disturbed.*]

KIT

(*Seeing him.*) I don't know nothing about your old candle-sticks. Why don't you look on the altar where they belong? That's where they ought to be, ain't it.

TRAMP

I wasn't going to take their candle-sticks. I was only foolin'.

DODGE

You can explain all that later. (*To KIT and JIP.*) All I've got to say to you boys is, that for a couple of outlaws you'll find worse enemies than sheriffs. Isn't that so, boys?

KIT

(*Meekly.*) Yes, sir.

DODGE

And now you had better both go

home or your mothers will be worrying. I'll take care of this fellow. (*He turns to the door, still holding a frightened tramp by the collar.*) And you boys had both better come to Sunday School Sunday.

KIT AND JIP

(*Together.*) Yes, sir. Thank you. [*DODGE and the TRAMP leave. For a moment KIT and JIP stand weakly. The thought of what they have almost escaped is too overwhelming for words. Then KIT revives suddenly.*]

KIT

(*Fiercely to JIP.*) Let's go home. You're a hell of an outlaw!

JIP

(*Frightened.*) Georgie, you're swearing.

KIT

Aw, go home, or I'll be doing something reckless. (*Throws his arm about JIP affectionately.*) I guess we landed a tramp all right. I bet they put him in jail.

[*He blows out the candles. The boys move towards the door.*]

JIP

What'll we play we be tomorrow night?

KIT

(*After thinking a moment. Then with inspiration.*) Let's be convicts.

[*They move towards the door—nice boys again, as the curtain falls.*]



THE great secret of happiness in love is to be glad the other fellow married her.



PUNISHMENT

By June Gibson

ONCE when I was a little girl I fell in love with a dirty Italian who played a hurdy-gurdy in the streets.
As he held me in his arms I gazed upon his grimy face in adoration.
My parents learned of my infatuation and placed me in a convent.
When I returned from the convent I married a professor of ethnogeny,
who was sedate, scrupulous and unromantic.
We have a lovely little daughter.
I have become very fond of my husband.
He has never discovered my secret.

Today I found my lovely little daughter entertaining an organ-grinder in the garden.
As he held her in his arms she gazed upon his grimy face in adoration. . . .



THE PRODIGAL

By Louis Untermeyer

A BASHED and blundering, I have come back
To force the liberal bounty of your love;
To ask for what I never had to lack
Or take too little of.

The brazen, desperate demands
Are halted by your clouded eyes;
Your cooling and compassionate hands
Choke my well-meaning lies.

Your wounded faith, your lavish love,
The glittering heights I cannot reach,
Those bright nobilities reprove
Me more than any speech.

Softly, your silence, like an unrung bell,
Breaks into gentle music, and the black
Barriers lift as, from a transient hell,
I have come back.

MRS. LEFFINGWELL'S WARNING

By William Hamilton Osborne

I

IT was after two o'clock in the morning when the bell rang in my apartment at the Doric. There had been no telephone message to precede it—nor had the night man on duty at the entrance called me up. There was just the ring of my apartment bell—and nothing more. I heard it—I had been awake for hours. But I let it ring and keep on ringing. Then, as I dressed, I glanced about me—everywhere—to make sure that everything was as it should be.

I was satisfied with the scrutiny. Unquestionably my bed bore evidence of having been occupied all night—heaven knows I had tossed and turned in it enough. I stared at myself in the mirror—yes, unquestionably I looked sleepy and tired, very, very tired. The bell, which had become silent, now rang again. And there were knocks.

"Yes," I called sleepily from my bedroom door, "yes, I'm coming—coming."

I switched on the lights in the hall.

I hastened now—they were knocking so insistently. But I didn't open to them—not at once.

"Yes," I called through the door that led into the Doric's outer hall, "yes. Who is it—what do you want—is it a telegram?"

"Mrs. Leffingwell!"

This voice I knew, coming though it did through the heavy wooden panels. It was the voice of young Mr. Bryce, the reporter on the *News-Chronicle*, who had written me up during my divorce. It was he calling my name—telling me that it was Bryce—and that it was not a telegram.

"Mrs. Leffingwell," he went on insistently, "sorry to trouble you—but I—we've—got news!"

I opened the door. There was young Mr. Bryce, looking as though it were two o'clock in the afternoon instead of two o'clock in the morning. And beside him was a very tall and very powerful-looking man.

"Mr. Bryce!" I exclaimed, drawing back, "who—who—is this gentleman?"

The big man held up his hand.

"I'm Inspector Breen—from headquarters, ma'am," he said. He opened his coat and showed me a silver shield.

"Inspector Breen," he went on, all the while pushing his way into my apartment, just as though he belonged there and as though I didn't. "And," he went on, sort of jerking a look back at young Mr. Bryce, "we've got some awful bad news for you—if you're Mrs. Leffingwell."

As he said it, it occurred to me that both he and Mr. Bryce were watching me closely—but I knew that I would bear inspection. Mr. Bryce put his hand on my shoulder—not familiarly as he did once during my divorce. Just sympathetically—at least that's the way it seemed to me.

"Mrs. Leffingwell," he said, in that low, penetrating voice of his, "you're not going to be grief-stricken, believe me. But you're going to be shocked. Leffingwell, your husband, has been killed . . ."

I looked from him to Inspector Breen. It seemed a long while before I spoke.

"How?" I asked, finally. "Was it an accident—was he drunk—did he fall? Are you sure?"

"Sure that he was killed?" returned Inspector Breen, eyeing me gravely and shaking his head. "With a man like that it had to come at last. . . ."

And it seemed to me that he was trying to be sympathetic—and moral—and couldn't quite make it. Or, possibly, he was just playing a part. I've never understood Inspector Breen—they tell me he's a very wonderful man in his line. I'm sure it's true.

"I want to know how—and where," I went on. "Where is he now? Do you—think I ought to go?"

It was Mr. Bryce who answered—and I could feel his hand still on my shoulder. "He was shot by Elsie Adams in her Tory Corner cottage, sometime after ten o'clock tonight," he said.

"Elsie Adams!" I echoed.

The Inspector evidently thought I didn't understand—didn't know who Elsie Adams was.

"The girl of all others," he said, "who ought to have been named as correspondent in your suit."

I remember catching at Mr. Bryce's arm.

"Tell me!" I demanded.

"It was she who gave the alarm," Mr. Bryce told me; "it was Elsie herself who called up the police. The plain clothes men who were sent out found her there—her mother was upstairs, sick in bed. They found her and Leffingwell—a doctor had worked over him to no good. He'd been shot through the head. And the gun was lying on the floor, just where she'd thrown it. The doctor, even, hadn't touched it. The doctor said that she'd refused to touch it"

"Why did she shoot him?" I demanded.

"Sam," exclaimed Mr. Bryce suddenly to the other man, "will you get that decanter over there? She's limp as a rag—wait till you get a little bracer, Mrs. Leffingwell."

They made me take it. They insisted on waiting till I felt better.

"What did she do it for?" I insisted.

"She denies that she did it at all," returned Mr. Bryce. "Says she heard

the shot but didn't see it. She talked—she gave up everything she knew—except that she didn't do the trick, and Leffingwell himself didn't do it. She insists on that."

"You—you've been there?" I gasped.

"Came from there to here," he answered, "and, as I say, this Elsie Adams denies the whole thing. Merely says that Leffingwell and she were to be married tomorrow, and were going at once, with her mother, to South America. Leffingwell was going to begin life all over again—with her. And while they were talking—but just when she wasn't looking, so she says—then there was the shot—just at that time. She didn't see any flash. Just heard the shot. Leffingwell keeled over—slumped to the floor. She tried to lift him. . . . When she looked around, the gun was lying on the floor—first time she'd seen it. She says that's all she knows. Fishy story. No servant in the house. Her mother upstairs, sick. Nobody else around."

The Inspector had been staring admiringly at my white bearskin rug. All the while Mr. Bryce talked he kept looking at it from time to time. And while he looked I could see that he fumbled in his waistcoat pocket for something. When Mr. Bryce stopped talking the Inspector stopped looking at the rug and looked at me.

"What ought I to do?" I asked them. "It isn't that Leffingwell is nothing to me, living or dead. He was my husband once. I want to do what I ought to do. And I want to do it now. I can't think for myself. Ought I go—to wherever he is?"

The Inspector stooped and picked up something from the bearskin.

"Chunk o' dirt on your white rug," he said.

He crossed the room and threw it into a waste-basket. At least I thought he did, for I heard it fall in among the loose paper. Somehow it occurred to me that he had only pretended to find a piece of dirt—and that he wanted to get a view of my disordered bedroom—the waste-basket stood to one side of

my open bedroom door. But he didn't seem to look. He came back, shaking his head.

"There's no call ma'am," he said gravely, as though he had thought it all out, "for you to do anything at all. The only reason we came to you at all is because Mr. Bryce here has got this to write up for his paper—and when we left Tory Corner he told me he was coming here and I said I'd come along. There's nothing to do. The Adams girl is under arrest. We've got the gun . . ."

"Why would she do it?" I demanded.

The Inspector shrugged his shoulders.

"Why would any woman kill Leffingwell?" he queried. "A drunk like him—with a dozen women whining at his heels. It ain't that this Adams girl is like the rest of 'em. My opinion is that Leffingwell's the only fellow she ever fell for. And my opinion is that he was just keeping her on a string—until you'd got your divorce and he was free. Then—you know how a fellow like that is—the minute he was free he didn't want to be tied down to any Elsie Adams. And she wanted to be tied down—and wanted him to be. We'll get it out of her sooner or later—though she's a wonder at her line of talk. But she's the girl that knows just what happened in that little living-room out at Tory Corner and she's got to tell! There's two lines of argument, it seems to me. Either he came there drunk tonight and attacked her and she shot him in self-defence—or else she's known he was going to leave her cold—and she waited for him to say so straight out—and then shot him. . . . As for you, ma'am, there's no call for you to do anything—not even to go into mourning. The courts have freed you—the courts right here. And now the higher court—that's freed you, too. You're rid of a bad bargain. That's all I've got to say."

When they had gone I double-locked the hall door. Then I switched off the lights in the living-room and made a bee-line for the waste-basket.

I carried the basket into my bedroom and turned its contents out upon a newspaper which I opened on the floor. The basket contained but one unfamiliar object—the small stub of a dirty lead pencil that smelt strongly of tobacco. There was no chunk of dirt.

Yet there had been a chunk of dirt, and Inspector Breen had picked it up. I saw it later, once and only once.

I saw it in the shape of fine red powder, when it was passed to the jury in the folds of a small piece of white paper, months later, in a courtroom, at the trial.

II

THEY tell me now that I have but half a day to live. That means just the rest of the night—less than twelve hours now, they say. Mr. Devon, the rector of St. Mark's, is with me. He is a Protestant—but he tells me, earnestly, that I may believe in purgatory. He gives me every hope. I feel sure that he believes in it himself.

I am dictating this statement to Miss Bates—she takes down everything just as I say it—it is to be revised by Mr. Devon later. Miss Bates is fine—she has stood by me through thick and thin—I think and hope that she understands. She tells me that she does—that she really does. She is the managing clerk of my lawyers—they have let her stay with me, until what is to happen to me happens.

I am writing this in the full consciousness that I have but one night more to live. Mr. Devon, the rector of St. Mark's, says that it is essential that I tell the exact truth—just the unvarnished facts as they are. They will stand out, he tells me, in the memory of any woman who reads them. It will be this full, frank confession that will help me—just as it is, it will stand as a terrible warning to women about to make the same terrible mistake I made.

I have already told him that before I did what I did—that it is true I followed the trial of two other women closely—Mrs. Cockcroft's murder trial

in Pennsylvania—Mrs. Delatour's in New Jersey. He asks me to realize what effect the acquittal of those women had upon my mind. He wants to know whether it wasn't those trials that made me feel secure—that justified me in my own mind. To make his point clear, he wonders whether Mrs. Delatour would have done what she did if Mrs. Cockcroft's trial had gone wrong—and whether Mrs. Cockcroft's crime would have been committed if the McIntyre woman had been convicted three years ago or more. With my mind upon these things I can realize, he tells me, that if I tell the truth and all the truth—no matter what I swore to at the trial—my statement will save the lives of a number of men hereafter. By their fruits ye shall know them, he tells me. . . . He indulges a great hope for me if I will tell the truth. God help me, I shall try. . . .

III

It was months before the murder that I learned to keep a diary. It was a trick I learned at the trial of Mrs. Cockcroft. Mrs. Cockcroft kept one—and, as you know, she was a good writer and a very intelligent woman, and her diary was one of the things that helped her. They said it was a blunder of the District Attorney ever to cross-examine her on it—for the result was that the whole diary got in, as they say, and showed up her side better than anything else could have done—and her jury actually believed that a woman who was half crazed could really go and write down how half crazed she was—do it in fine sentences—in cold blood. I read yesterday—in a news article about my case—that Mrs. Cockcroft is spending this winter in Jacksonville, Florida. . . . I have less than twelve hours to live.

My diary helps me out. I have it here. I am referring to it in making up this statement—but only to refresh my recollection. My diary—most of it is lies! *Here is the truth.* . . .

It was a month before the last big suffragist parade that I drove up to Cardozo's place to order a new riding habit—I was to be one of the marshals of the procession. Cardozo himself received me at his smart shop in his smart way—and then, with a queer look in his eyes, turned me over to his credit-man. His credit-man bowed me into his own private little office, and shut the door behind me. He was very polite. He explained to me that the habit I was ordering would cost in the neighborhood of four hundred and fifty dollars, including the accessories. I had not stopped to ask the price. He went on. Cardozo's were, of course, honored by my order—but it would be impossible for them to fill the order unless I could pay cash. They desired above all things to retain my custom, but . . .

I didn't know what it meant—and I didn't ask.

"You will fill this order," I warned the credit-man, beside myself with the offence of the thing, "and charge it to my husband. He is perfectly good for it. If you decline, then Cardozo's has seen the last of me."

The credit-manager was profuse in his apology. He handed me a letter.

"It is Mr. Leffingwell who interferes," he said.

I read the letter. It was Dolf's. It was addressed to Cardozo's. I discovered later that it was but one of many letters he had sent out the day before to all my stores in town. The letter was brief enough—it stated that owing to his present financial condition he preferred that no more credit be extended to his wife. He declined to pay further bills. He asked that if any controversy arose about the matter, that the matter be referred to him.

You can understand after that that if I left Cardozo's in a huff I reached home in a perfect rage—for the time was short and I had to have a decent riding habit. I canvassed all the stores on my list—they declined, in the circumstances, to take my order.

I sent for Dolf that night—of course we didn't live together—and Dolf came.

I must say for him that he was always willing to talk. He found me in the same condition that I had come home in—in a tearing rage. Why I didn't have the nerve to kill him in one of my rages I can't understand—why did I wait—why did I plot and plan?

At any rate, he came to me—he was drunk as usual. He was in good spirits—wanted to hug me—wanted to elope with me, even though I was his wife—he babbled senselessly about beginning life again.

I had made Cardozo's man give me the letter he'd shown me. I pulled it out now and thrust it into Dolf's drunken face with all my strength. It was a blow—a swift, strong blow—and it sobered him at once. He picked up the letter from the floor and read it. Then I flared out at him—with me it was the end—the limit. Any man who could humiliate his wife like that—with the credit-managers of the shops where I'd always traded—a man like that was as low as any that ever lived.

"But, look-a-here," Dolf said—and suddenly he frowned with that ugly frown of his—"I told you a month ago that you mustn't order any more on credit. What's more, I told you if you kept it up I'd have to do this very thing. What's more, I even gave you a copy of the letter I proposed to send—a copy of this—advance copy. You've got it somewhere unless you tore it up. I gave you fair warning about the thing—but you kept right on. . . ."

He had given me warning, it is true—and he had given me a copy of the letter. But that he would be nasty enough to carry out his threat!

"What flummery were you tryin' to buy today?" he asked, leering at me. I tried not to answer him, but I found myself flashing out at him that if I didn't have my riding habit in time for the suffragist parade that I'd kill him—I meant it, too.

"Now, look-a-here," he said, still leering at me in that peculiarly insulting way of his, "I got a memory that's a yard long at any rate. You've got a riding habit—and all the fixings. And

a good one—unless you've grown too stout from doing nothing. Suffrage parade—and you a marshal, eh? It'll rain anyhow, it always does. Then who'll know the diff?

"Look here," he presently went on, weaving to and fro in the chair he lurched into, "Suffrage. You a suffrage leader? Seems to me I've seen your picture in the papers—worth looking at, too, Nella, I'll say that for you. Suffrage—good. But what are you doing for the cause? Work, I mean—what work? How much flesh are you losing for the cause? How much self-denial have you practised? That's the idea. That's what makes any cause—work and self-denial. Not riding habits. . . ."

He stopped and stuck his hand in his trousers pocket.

He drew out a lot of bills—all mussed up, they were. He straightened them out somehow and counted out two hundred dollars and laid them on the table.

"Nella," he said to me, "there's a couple of hundred—it's the best that I can do. . . ."

I was at the table in a flash. I clutched the money, twisted it into a crumpled ball and flung it at him.

"I need five hundred dollars for my outfit," I told him. "You can take your two hundred dollars with you when you go—and you'll go right now!"

He left the money on the floor—and I left it there. Later I picked it up and used it—after he was gone. Now he kept leering at me—laughing at me in his maudlin way.

"Outfit—outfit!" he kept repeating. "I didn't give you the two hundred for any outfit. I gave it to you for the cause. I'm no suffragist. You are—and I want to see you a good one while you're about it. That two hundred I give to you in trust—it's for the cause. You wear your old riding habit—that's the idea. Have it let out—or work yourself down into it—you've got some weeks left yet. You do that. And give this two hundred to the cause. You

say you're a suffragist—then be one. A little self-denial—here's your chance. . . ."

You can understand how any woman would feel under the lash of his drunken insults. I was so beside myself that I didn't care whether he took the two hundred dollars with him or not. In the end he didn't take it—and in the end I made Cardozo fix me up for the two hundred. I'd spent thousands at Cardozo's—they could afford to favor me this once.

But I'm not through with Dolf's visit. The angrier I got the more insulting he got. What's more, he tried to become serious—affected to be angry himself.

"Look here, Nella," he said to me finally, kicking the wad of bills into a corner, "I can't stand it—I simply can't. You married a five-thousand-dollar-a-year man—that's what you married, and you knew it."

Talk like that, you see! When every man makes at least ten thousand dollars a year. Any man that calls himself a business man, to say the least.

"And you weren't satisfied," he went on. "You wanted fifteen thousand. And I made it, fool that I was. And you weren't satisfied even then. And I made twenty-five thousand dollars. And you're not satisfied now. And it's broke me. You had a good man in your hands—to make or break him—and you broke him with your demands—broke him on the wheel—broke his nerve—made him a rummy. It's made me a genteel bum—that's what it's done."

"You understate the case," I reminded him. "You happen to be a beast and a rotter. What about the twenty thousand dollars that I had when I married you? You stole that—deliberately stole it. Give it back to me. I want it now!"

"You handed it to me, and I took it," he admitted. "What a fool I was! I ought to have put it into a business—I ought to have made it the foundation of a decent career. If you call it stealing, well and good. I can't give it back—I'm broke. But I can account for it—every cent. Every blasted cent of

that money—it wasn't twenty thousand—every blasted cent went long ago to pay your bills. . . ."

"Your bills," I retorted, "for your wine and—*your women!*"

IV

HERE I am warned again by Mr. Devon. He repeats that I must tell the truth and nothing but the truth. He asks me to record his warning here—he wants to make it plain to me that I must not even give wrong impressions. I must give the truth in spirit as in letter. I understand. I shall do my best to obey. I'll tell the truth, and particularly about my twenty-thousand dollars. It wasn't twenty thousand—it was about fourteen. And I let Dolf have it. And we lived it up—yes, that is true.

I am quite sure that the bills for my clothes for the first three years after our marriage ranged over five thousand a year. But I had my own viewpoint about that—and I have it now. It was his business to pay for them. It was his business to earn money to pay for them. Any man can earn all the money he wants if he'll go downtown to his desk and work there all day—work hard. Mr. Devon smiles at me. He wants to know whether I think the rector of St. Mark's works hard—and also how much he earns. And how much more he can earn by working harder. And who will pay it.

I don't see what that has to do with it. After the first two or three years Dolf didn't work—he didn't work hard at any rate, even though for a time he did make more money. And I have never been unreasonable. I am telling the truth when I say that I was a very pretty woman—but all the more I needed stylish clothes. Dolf knew that when he married me. The whole thing was very simple. All he had to do was to do his part—see to it that he earned enough to enable us to live in the style that we should live. That's where he failed in his duty—that, first. Then later, the drink—and the women.

But I am not through with Dolf's visit that night. When I mentioned his bills—and his women—Dolf stopped short. He couldn't answer that, so he changed his tack—of course adding insult to injury.

"Look here, Nella," he said, "let's cut out the whole rotten business."

You can see his self-centered point of view—you can see how he thrust forth his claim all the while—his claim that he was badly treated—that somehow I was at fault. It wasn't *he* that was to cut out the whole rotten business—it was both of us. The rotten business was *our* affair, not his alone.

"Let's cut out the whole rotten business," he went on. "I don't want to drink—I want to live. I don't want other women—I want you. Let's quit—let's go somewhere, where we don't have to spend money—somewhere where I can earn enough to live on. I can earn something. I'm good enough for that. I can get a job in South America for a hundred a week—easy. In time I can double that. In time we can save money. And we won't have to keep up appearances. And I'll live straight. And we'll have children—and live happy ever after. . . ."

Children! You can see the impossible conditions Dolf tried to impose from the start. Ever since we married he had harped on children. Think of our children, with *him* for their father! And, besides, he never yet had earned enough to keep the two of us, let alone more. Children! And he couldn't even pay *my* bills. . . .

"Come on," he urged, "we've made a mess of things. . . ."

"*We*?" I reminded him.

"Well, *I* have," he admitted, "but it's not too late to start fresh. Let's try it once. I'll cut out drink—I'll cut out everything."

He sort of held out his hands toward me. I was ready for that. I looked him straight in the eyes.

"Have you finished your maudlin speeches?" I asked him. "If you have, I've got something to say—something that isn't maudlin. This is it. You're

a brute and a rotter. You have treated me as no man that calls himself a man could ever treat a woman. You've insulted and humiliated me beyond measure. Now, I want a divorce. I'm going to have a divorce, and I'm going to start right now!"

It staggered him, I think. But he saw that I meant it—saw there was no use of further parley. I could see that it had made him angry.

He rose. Then—

"Go ahead and get it," he said to me defiantly.

"I'm going to get it," I told him, "and you'll consent to it. After this insult—at Cardozo's—everywhere, I can never live with you again. And I decline to be tied to you. And it was not only about Cardozo's and the others that I sent for you. What I wanted to see you about is money—future money. I must live. You will have to arrange for that—you must arrange to pay me at least one hundred and fifty dollars a week."

I was ready for him. I had written out a statement of what I actually needed for my support. I handed it to him. It was a list of actual necessities, nothing more.

"You see for yourself," I told him, "that it's reasonable. No woman could get along on less."

"I can't pay a hundred and fifty a week," he returned, shaking his head. "I'm not making seventy-five hundred a year—I'm not making half of that now, if you want to know. That's why I had to stop your bills. And this divorce is going to knock my business cold—for a year or two at least. That means even less."

He folded up the statement and put it in his pocket. He picked up his hat and cane.

"What are you going to do?" he asked. "How are you going to arrange? Are you going West?"

I shook my head. I had thought that all out, too. I determined there would be no questionable Reno divorce for me. And I was right.

"I am going to get my divorce right

here in this State," I told him, "right here where I live and where you have carried on your pernicious practices—here where we're known. I am going to get my divorce on statutory grounds."

"You haven't got the evidence," he said.

I felt that he watched me closely as he said it. Part of my answer was foolish. For at that time I had no evidence. Think of it—what all the world knew about Dolf—what all his friends knew—what I knew, I couldn't prove. It didn't worry me just now.

"You will furnish the evidence," I told him. "You can see my counsel—you can pay them. You can arrange the evidence in your own way. You know that as well as I do. You're only too glad to do it, probably. See them at once."

He gave me another queer look. I didn't understand it till later.

"I decline to see your counsel," he returned stolidly. "You can proceed in your own way. I don't care how. But I'll not be party to it. And from now on I decline to furnish evidence. There's a reason—a good reason. Go ahead in your own way, and understand one thing very clearly. I'll pay the alimony that the court awards—no more."

I didn't know his reason then—I learnt it later. Elsie Adams was his reason—I shall have much to say about her before I'm through.

The next day I called on my counsel and had a conference with them. The day after they sent a detective to me. He brought a woman with him. Much as I detested it, all this was necessary. We had an interview behind closed doors, as they say.

"I know Dolf Leffingwell," said this woman. "He's an easy mark. Get him lit up and he'll go anywhere with anybody. I've handled him before—I can handle him now. He likes my line of sympathetic talk. He's always thinking about love in a cottage—and a lot of children—when he's full."

I thought at the time that the woman didn't like the way I looked at her. And

I felt that the detective winced a little as he watched me. For he watched me all the time. The woman met my gaze and tossed her head. She looked me over coolly.

"I'll get Dolf Leffingwell," she went on, "nothing easier. How much do I get?"

"How much will you get—from him?" I asked.

There was a sort of horror in her eyes as she looked at me.

"You don't think," she said defiantly, "that I'd double cross Dolf Leffingwell and take his money, too. That's one of the things that isn't done—by me."

We arranged the terms. I had raised some money on some jewels. I paid her half of her fee in advance. But she kept looking hard at a gown or two that I had spread out upon a chair.

"Say," she said before she went, "you and I are just about the same build—know that? Couldn't you stake me to one of your swell Paris gowns? I don't care whether it's a bit rusty. I want the stuff and the cut—that's tony. That always looks tony. I can flash a three-hundred-dollar gown a year or more—and then some, by making over. It lasts."

I looked at the detective.

He nodded, flashing me a glance that indicated clearly that the wise thing to do with people of that kind was to humor them to the limit. I let her pick out one of my worn gowns—but it made me boil to think of her wearing it—my gown!

I watched her wrap it up.

"Let me ask you something," I asked her when she'd finished. "What is it that a man like my husband sees in women like—you?"

It was a mistake, of course, but I simply couldn't help it.

"My God!" exclaimed the lady, edging toward the door, "what the devil could he see in you?"

V

ONE evening shortly afterward they called me in a hurry over the telephone.

It was after midnight. The detective and his assistant had tracked Dolf and this woman to one of the hotels on the west side. I was wanted for purposes of identification. I was ready and I went.

When I reached the hotel I was taken upstairs in the elevator. The two men—my detective and another—were waiting in the corridor. They were waiting outside a door. When I came they stepped up to the door and tried to open it. It was locked. They knocked. The door was opened—by the woman. Immediately on our entrance she threw herself into Dolf's arms, screaming. Dolf let her scream—he submitted to her hysterical embrace. She was a good actress, I will say that for her. Then Dolf unlocked her arms from about his neck, and looked at us with a curious smile on his face. To my surprise he was sober—and very pale. I noticed once or twice that he cast a hurried glance about the room. Why, I didn't know.

"Well," he said in measured tones, while my detective took down all he said in a little note book, "Well, you got to me, didn't you? The trap worked. Hotel register down stairs—locked door—everything. No use crying over spilt milk. Now—kindly get out. Leave us alone."

"You're going to remain here—with her?" I demanded.

"Unquestionably," said Dolf coolly, "that's exactly what's going to happen. I'm going to remain here with her. Good night. Good-bye."

He bowed us out of the room—that queer smile on his face. He locked the door behind us.

"His last remark," said my detective, "clinches the situation. He must be stuck on her."

* * *

It was three weeks later that my lawyers asked me to call at their office. They had, of course, brought suit. Dolf had been served with papers. They wanted to talk about alimony. Dolf was there. With him was a girl I had never seen before. She was a

very pretty girl, I will say that for her. And she was young. But she was dressed like a dowdy. Dolf caught her by the arms.

"This," said Dolf to me, "is Miss Elsie Adams. She knows all my history. She is a friend of mine. With her I have been open and above board. As soon as your divorce is granted she will marry me. I have brought her here today. I want her to see with her own eyes everything that goes on. It doesn't matter to me now what anybody else in the world thinks. She's the only person I consider—the only one whose opinion matters to me. Now, sir," he said to the member of the law firm who was present—Mr. Devon tells me not to mention names—"now, sir, we've settled the question of the counsel fee. How about the alimony?"

"Two hundred a week, at least," said my lawyer.

"Two hundred a month," returned Dolf, "that's flat."

"We can get a thousand a month," retorted my counsel.

"Apply for it," said Dolf indifferently, "the opposing affidavit that I'll file will throw me into bankruptcy—you won't get a cent—!"

"But—you'll get into the county jail," returned my lawyer significantly.

Dolf shook his head.

"That's just exactly what won't happen," he retorted. "All my plans have been laid against that end. No jail for me. Listen. This is final. I now offer two hundred a month. Take it or leave it. Within five minutes I'll withdraw the offer. Five minutes—do you understand?"

My counsel took me into another room. I could see that he really believed that Dolf couldn't pay nearly what we asked. It made me furious to see how he seemed to be talking on Dolf's side.

"All he's got to do is to earn the money," I explained to him. Beside, I showed him my bills for the past year. He said they didn't prove how much Dolf was making—they only proved

how much we'd spent—how much the bills came to.

We must have proof he said, as to how much Dolf was making. If we couldn't get Dolf to agree on some amount, then we'd have to furnish proof to the court. Finally we went back to Dolf—and that Adams girl.

"We'll take five thousand dollars a year—a hundred a week," said my lawyer.

"It's an outrage!" I blurted out.

"Yes," said Dolf slowly, "it is an outrage. My offer of two hundred a month is withdrawn. I'm not making four thousand a year now—in the circumstances I really can't afford to take twenty-four hundred out of that—it would only leave me fifteen hundred dollars"—he looked at the Adams girl as he said it—"and so," he went on, in his cool, quiet, hard voice, "I'll change my offer. My wife can take the fifteen hundred and we'll take the rest. I'm willing to pay her \$1,500 a year and not a dollar more. When I get to South America I'll add five hundred more to that—she can live on that. She can't get a dollar more—not out of me. This offer you'll take or leave. If you refuse it, I know just what to do. I shall be very glad to inform the court that my wife and this law firm and their detective dickered with Stasie Lewis to set a trap for me—paid Stasie Lewis for it, and gave her a Paris gown in the bargain. I've seen the gown and recognized it as my wife's. You know whether all that spells conspiracy! I'll be glad to put it up to the court. I'll be glad to show the court that Stasie Lewis and I went to the Golconda that evening and registered as man and wife, and were shown into a room where two of my own business associates were already concealed—in the bathroom—and where a clothes closet furnished shelter for another woman of a different stamp—a young woman friend of mine who must know everything about me that goes on. These people know all that happened, heard everything, saw everything. They saw the

gown—they heard Stasie Lewis tell me how everything had been arranged. I'll be glad to have this matter aired in court. My skirts are clean. I'll defend this suit with pleasure. And now, it's up to you!"

My lawyer beckoned me into the little private room again. He seemed very much surprised at this attitude of Dolf's. He thought I'd had what he called a gentlemen's agreement with Dolf about it.

"We—this firm—" he said, "we—can't afford to go through with this. We can't have our names besmirched—worse, maybe—it's a nasty situation—"

"How nasty?" I asked.

He didn't tell me. He asked another question.

"Does your husband sound as though he told the truth?" he queried.

I told him that he did. I knew Dolf's ways perfectly. Beside, it was the truth. We all knew that—except that we hadn't known that anybody else but Dolf and Stasie Lewis was in that room that night.

"He sounds queer," I said, "I don't like the way he talks."

"He's held this up his sleeve," said the lawyer, "it's too ticklish a thing for us to handle, unless. . ."

We went back to Dolf.

"Mr. Leffingwell," said my lawyer, "we'll discontinue this suit right here and now. We've got plenty of evidence as to your past performances—we'll use that."

Dolf laughed—his laugh was hard—jeering.

"Oh, no, you haven't," he said, shaking his head, "you haven't got any other evidence or you wouldn't have taken the pains to get this in the way you did."

"No," he went on, still shaking his head, "no, you won't discontinue this suit now or at any other time! Your detective and Stasie Lewis stand ready to make a case for you—you know that. Nella can get a divorce on their evidence. And I want her to get a divorce. I want to be free, you understand? I'm very anxious to be free. But I'm not going to be held up for

something I can't pay, and I'm not going to be put in jail. I've caught you in a nice, pleasing little conspiracy—the whole bunch of you—and if it does nothing else, it'll tarnish the reputation of the bunch. And as for county jail. . . . But you'll take the alimony that I offer. And this suit is going on."

"Yes," I exclaimed, "yes, this suit is going on. Only," I said, turning to my lawyer, "*and to the name of Stasie Lewis as co-respondent the name of Elsie Adams—this young woman here!*"

The girl turned to my husband.

"Oh, Dolf," she cried, "it wouldn't be true—it wouldn't be right. I've never done anything like that in all my life. My mother . . . !"

She ended up, shuddering, against Dolf. He held her tight.

He looked us all in the face, slowly, steadily—he was very pale.

"You will go on with this suit just as it is," he told us, "just as it is! And you'll accept thirty dollars a week permanent alimony. And you'll get your divorce—and leave me free to marry. Understand?"

"Blackmail!" cried my counsel.

"Just about that," returned Dolf, "I'm being held up. But I'm used to it. I've always been held up—always. That's what I'm made for—to be held up. It's sent me into the gutter—that kind of thing. But I'm through. I've changed. I've got my grip on happiness,"—he held the Adams girl the closer to him—"and I'm not going to let go. I'm going to live."

He looked down at her and she looked up at him.

"I'm going to make something real of my life—something real," he went on, "but don't put any obstacles in my path—not now! I'll have no mercy on anybody who crosses me now. I'm not to be trusted now. I'm desperate." He stared at my lawyer—then at me. "You understand?" he said.

My lawyer changed his tack. He asked Dolf mildly if Dolf would let him put an expert on his books—asked

him if he could demonstrate just how little he was making.

"Now you're talking," said Dolf, "I'll do that gladly. You'll see that I'm not making the money. You can't get blood out of a stone."

* * *

A week later my lawyers sent for me again. You may be sure I didn't go without having first consulted other lawyers that I knew. They were all of the same mind. They all said that if the husband wasn't making the money, the court wouldn't make him pay. They all told me to make the best of it. They said I was young and good looking—I was prominent—and had my picture in the papers. I could make a good match—I could marry well. They said to let Dolf whistle down the wind. He wasn't worth considering, they felt.

Still without understanding, I obeyed my lawyers' summons. I went to their office to see what they had to say. They had been over Dolf's books. He had told them the truth—he had not been making the money. It mattered not how much of a beast he was—if he couldn't pay, he couldn't pay, that's all. That's what they had to say.

But they had other news. Dolf had secured a position in Buenos Aires from a friend of his—on his solemn promise to keep straight. He was to get his expenses down there, and five thousand dollars a year, just what he had been waiting for. As soon as my final decree was entered he would go down there. He had told my lawyer that as a matter of fact I was entitled to a divorce many times over.

"Only," he had told my lawyer, "if *she's* entitled to a divorce, I don't know what *I'm* entitled to. The law doesn't give a husband anything in place of children—the law doesn't furnish any kind of relief against a wife that breaks her husband. But let it go. . . ."

He was going to marry Elsie Adams and go to South America. Meantime he would furnish adequate security to pay me two thousand dollars a year. Two thousand dollars a year. . . .

"A woman in my position almost needs that much a month," I told my counsel.

"Mrs. Leffingwell," said my counsel, "I am talking for your own good. I think this man Leffingwell means what he says. If we don't accede to his terms—and we can't get any better terms, that's clear—the court won't do any better by us. . . . If we don't accede to his terms, he's going to make trouble—great trouble. And to clear themselves, this detective—you know what detectives are—this detective and this Stasie Lewis will turn against you. To do it they'll select a victim—that victim will be you. Net result: no divorce, no alimony—and the possibility of a charge of conspiracy. Divorce in this state is a scandal anyway. You are a well-known woman—your husband is a well-known man. The newspapers here would give their eye teeth for a scandal and a good one. And you know as well as I do that this man Leffingwell is desperate."

I listened coldly to all he had to say. I knew well enough that his statement of the situation was a fair one. But I had something to say.

"I am desperate also," I told him, "as desperate as Dolf Leffingwell. Let him look out."

For I made up my mind then and there.

I made up my mind, first, that Dolf would pay me all the money that I wanted—not what I needed, now, but what I wanted—all the money I desired. He would do that—or take the consequences.

Secondly, I made up my mind that he'd never marry that pink faced doll—that Elsie Adams, with her saint's face, and her dowdy home-made clothes—he'd never marry her. Or if he did, he'd take the consequences.

And the consequences . . . !

VI

I DON'T think I formed any real plan until I began to attend the daily sessions at the trial of Mrs. Delatour across the river. She had killed her

husband—a quarrel over money matters, chiefly. He was a brute—he had driven her crazy so she claimed. She had poisoned him—that made it bad for her.

When her trial began I attended every day. I wore a heavy veil. Once they referred to me in the papers as the veiled woman. I think they thought I was to be a witness—or maybe that I had killed Mr. Delatour myself. The next time I went I wore an entirely different costume, and sat far back in a corner—I wore a very light but heavily figured veil. That night the papers said the veiled woman was missing. I went unnoticed among the other women. And day after day I listened to the testimony—and I watched Mrs. Delatour.

She wasn't crazy—not in my mind. No more crazy than I was myself. She was quite pretty, in her way—and very pale and tired looking. But she wasn't as pretty as I am, even now. That was one fact that I tucked away in the back of my memory. And she kept looking at the jury—looking at one after the other—just a plaintive, but very personal, sort of look.

All during her trial I was neglecting other things—for one, my duties at the suffragist headquarters. I was supposed to be there daily to help—yes, and to be ordered about. They even asked me why I wasn't there—they needed my assistance so they said. I was told after the campaign was over that, notwithstanding my prominence in the movement, it has been claimed I did nothing to help the cause along—that I joined just for the glamour—that I wanted to get into the papers. All I can say is, that they needed somebody to look well and dress well, both on platforms and on horseback and in the Sunday papers. A campaign must be made attractive. I think I did my part. So I kept on in my own way, and part of my way, as I have said, was to follow the Delatour trial in person. I was there at the beginning. I was there all through. I was there at the end.

My own opinion is that she was a cat

—this Mrs. Delatour—and nothing else. Well, she had poisoned her husband. But he was a brute—so they let her off. The day after her acquittal she went on the stage.

And suddenly, I knew what I had to do. I knew something else. I knew it could be done. Unknown to them, unseen by them, I dogged the footsteps of Elsie Adams and my husband. They were careless—carefree. They had nothing to fear. They never knew that I was about. Once I overheard them talking in a restaurant. Dolf was fuming, fretting on account of the delay.

"You don't understand what it means to a chap who's going to start fresh," he told her, "who's got his whole life to retrieve—to live over. It's the whole thing. It's salvation. It means even more to me than if I hadn't gone through—things. It's glorious. But I'm afraid—afraid of what can happen before. . . .!"

"Dolf," I heard her say—in that sure, good smug way of hers—how I hated her! "Dolf, dear, there's nothing to fear. Nothing to be afraid of. We're going to keep on living, both of us—and the time draws nearer and nearer. I know all about you, Dolf—and you know all about me. What's past can't trouble us. There are no spectres—nothing can come between us. And Dolf"—yes, I could hear her say this, too, "Dolf, I'm just as impatient as you are, Dolf—just as much—and maybe the least bit more."

It was then that I knew it must be done—that I must do it—that there was no other way.

Already I had good reason—as good as any one could want—to hate my husband. The insults heaped on me at Cardozo's and the other places—the pittance of two thousand dollars a year that he was paying me. . . . I had good reason. . . . I had many reasons. But all the reasons—all the drunkenness—all the women Dolf had had—all faded out before this intolerable thing. Dolf was going to South America with this pink-faced bride—this Elsie

Adams. Yes, I knew the type—the born mother. She mothered him—she would mother his children. Love in a cottage—I knew the kind. . . .

Not if I could prevent it. And it came to me then and there—and I gloated over the knowledge—it came over me then and there that I had the power to stop it. I made up my mind to one thing—never should Dolf hold this girl in his arms as his bride—never should she get him. I made up my mind to that. The divorce suit should go on—but that wouldn't help him. Let it go on—it remained with me to snatch from them their ecstasy at the very instant that they reached out eager hands to clutch it. Why not? I hated him—I hated her. She—that was going to spend the money that was mine—going to bury herself in South America with my husband—rear his children. . . . No!

I knew what was to be done and how to do it. I waited until two weeks before my final divorce decree was due. You may say that I could have accomplished my object by stopping the divorce. I had thought that all out. I was tangled up with lawyers, with detectives, with Stasie Lewis—but I was not so afraid of them as I was of Dolf's threat that he would have what he wanted—that he would ride through. I knew that he would ride through. And I knew that the time must come when he and the Adams girl would take their happiness, divorce or no divorce. They were infatuated with each other—so infatuated that Dolf wasn't drinking any more. And he was looking young and strong again. No, as I said to myself over and over again, the divorce must go on—it was too late to stop any of us—we were all riding through. Only—I knew that I should ride through first.

I settled down into seeming satisfaction. . . . waited.

I bought the gun in a city fifty miles away. I told the clerk I was a Red Cross volunteer going to France, and needed one. He was presumptuous.

"I'd like to be wounded about three

times a day around your emergency hospital," he told me.

He told me that because he admired me—I could see it in his face. He admired because I was pretty. I knew that—felt that keenly. It was going to help me—it would stand me in good stead.

Nights later I stood outside Elsie Adams' cottage. The window was open. Dolf was there. He was showing her a copy of the final decree in my divorce suit—he had got it certified on his way out that afternoon. They were exultant—I could see it, feel it. Nothing stood between them and the great happiness they'd waited for . . .

The girl stepped for a moment out of the room. I shot Dolf in the back while she was absent. Then I tossed the gun into the room through the window. I went back home. They arrested Elsie Adams for the crime. Three days after her arrest they released her.

Tory Corner mud is very red and clayey. I had brought some into the house—my own apartment. It seems to have been a simple matter for them to trace the purchase of the gun. And I had thrown it through the open window—my big mistake.

It was Inspector Breen who took me to the county jail and locked me up. And it was Inspector Breen who had picked up that bit of dried red mud from the surface of my white bear-skin on that night when he and Mr. Bryce first came to my apartment.

The county prosecutor had a private interview with me. And I talked—talked freely. I knew what to say. It was not for nothing that I had followed closely three big murder trials in as many years. I knew just what to say—just what not to say. My mind had been a blank—I told him so. I talked about everything that had happened since my arrest. I talked about matters three weeks old. So far as the intervening period was concerned, it was I who asked the questions—he who answered them.

I had picked my counsel long ago—

he was the biggest lawyer in the county. I sent for him now. He was away. One of his partners and one of his assistants came up to the jail to see me. I shall not mention names, nor shall I describe these men. Mr. Devon tells me it is better so. They got the prosecutor to put us into a small bare room. When they were left alone with me, they made sure no dictaphone machine was concealed anywhere about—beside which they had the prosecutor's word for it that we would not be overheard. They closed the door and locked it. We sat down at a little table and put our heads together. One of the lawyers glanced at me very earnestly.

"You must tell everything," he said, "we can't do anything for you unless you do."

I nodded.

"I killed him," I said, "just after I'd seen her in his arms. I—I couldn't help it. Something came over me."

They looked at each other. One of them nodded.

"A married woman," he said, his eyes hopeful, "sees another woman in her husband's arms—of course she shoots, why not?"

The elder of the two smiled. He shook his head. "Having deliberately bought the gun a week or so before. Having deliberately lain in wait. Having the knowledge further that she was not his wife, but that she was divorced, and that the divorce was obtained by her own will, on her own petition. And," he went on, mercilessly, it seemed to me, "that she had sought the divorce because her husband's treatment of her had made it impossible for her to live with him—because she had lost all affection for him. Knowing that she's free—knowing that she can re-marry if she wants to. But knowing also that he is taking advantage of this same decree—and will remarry—what happens? She has a brainstorm and shoots him with the pistol she's been treasuring for weeks. It won't go down. It's no go!"

"Mrs. Delatour got it over," said the younger man.

"Not on *these facts*," returned the other.

I stopped them.

"I wish," I said, "that Mr. — that your partner had come here. It was he I sent for. It is he I want to see."

For their talk worried me. I didn't understand then why they had said these things. It looked to me as though they thought I might have no defense—and I knew I had a defense. I had listened to every shred of the evidence at the Delatour trial. I had improved on her devices. She got off. I knew I must get off.

The elder of the two men smiled at me.

"Of course, Mrs. Leffingwell," he said, "a woman of your high intelligence can well understand why we indulge in this discussion in your presence. We do it for your own good. Here and now and in this room we must evolve the theory of our defense. To delay it is dangerous. For from now on you must think and talk only along the lines of this defense. We've got to get you off. We're going to get you off—we'll do it, never fear."

He was silent for a moment—silent and staring steadily at me. He touched his younger associate on the arm.

"Look at her," he said, "just as she is. Isn't she a picture? No jury'll ever convict a woman who looks like that. All the feminine appeal in the world is bound up in her."

The other man drew his breath sharply. I saw the color creep up into his face. His eyes glowed.

"I get you," he murmured, "I get you. She's better than Mrs. Delatour—a thousand to one. The fatal gift of beauty. You've got it, Mrs. Leffingwell—it's sure to pull you through. . . ."

"What," demanded the other man, "have you told the prosecutor? Nothing, I take it—good!"

But I had told him things, and I repeated them now.

"Godfrey," exclaimed the younger man, "the very thing. Your own idea was right. We take off our hats to you, Mrs. Leffingwell. No brainstorm

—no insanity to prove. Her mind a blank? Why a blank? Easy enough. It's due to the cumulative effect of years of brutal treatment—of humiliation—of terror. At last it unnerves her. She buys the pistol without knowing it—the excitement of her divorce has been too much. She tracks Leffingwell without knowing it. She shoots him without knowing it. Insanity—nothing. Besides, she doesn't want to take a chance of being tied up in an asylum. This was mental aberration—aphasia—that's all. The symptoms mostly subjective—most of them dependent upon her own testimony. Her own description—they'll believe it. Aphasia is the trick. And the cause of it the brute she killed. That—and the woman that she is will pull her through."

Their manner irritated me—insulted me. It seemed to me as though they regarded me as some printed argument, or the stenographic minutes of a trial.

"Gentlemen," I said, "gentlemen—I want you to understand something, as between ourselves. I want you to feel that the killing was justified—I had to kill my husband—had to kill him, after all that happened. . . ."

And I told them how he had stopped my credit at the stores—reminded them of his dastard trick in cutting down my alimony.

"And I couldn't," I went on, "have that smug-faced Adams girl get him—I didn't care so much about the other women—but that girl—I think you understand. . . ."

The elder of the two held up his hand as though to quiet me with the assurance that they understood everything.

"Don't talk, Mrs. Leffingwell," he said, "talk to no one save to my senior partner—he will see you here this afternoon—to no one save him, to my associate here, and to myself."

VII

WHEN the day of my trial arrived, I knew and felt that no prettier woman than I had ever stepped across the threshold of that dingy courtroom. I

could feel the gasp of admiration as I lifted my veil and shook hands with my counsel—as he bowed me to my seat.

"Make yourself very easy," he whispered to me. "Nothing goes on, as you perceive, until you reach here—nothing can transpire in your absence. It is your constitutional right. You are the one important individual to be considered. The prosecutor is afraid of you—don't be afraid of him. Public sentiment's behind you. Take your time—all will be well. These are our experts in the front seats there—you've talked to most of them—the big men of the state. In a minute they'll begin to call the jury."

Almost instantly they began.

"Ellen T. Walker," called an officer after sticking his hand into a box and bringing out a little slip of paper. "Ellen T. Walker—there she is."

I touched my counsel's arm.

"Not *women* jurors!" I exclaimed. "They don't have women jurors here?"

My counsel smiled easily, and swung his eyeglasses in the air.

"You ladies *would* have suffrage," he returned, "and suffrage in this State has brought us women jurors. With the privilege of voting comes the duty of the voter."

"But I don't want women on the jury," I protested. "I want men—young men, at that."

He looked at me understandingly.

"Don't fear," he said, "we both want the same thing. We'll try and get just what we want. There's lots of time."

The prosecutor was asking Ellen Walker questions. I remember only one—it was the last question that he asked her.

"Mrs. Walker," he said, "where a wife has been accused of murdering her husband—where do your sympathies naturally lie?"

It seemed to be just a general preliminary question leading up to some detailed investigation as to Ellen Walker's state of mind. She answered the question, looking steadily at me.

"My sympathies," she said firmly, "are always with a wife who's been

abused. But," she kept steadily looking at me the while, "notwithstanding that I should find a verdict according to the evidence and nothing else."

To my surprise the prosecutor sat down.

"Satisfactory to me," he said.

Everybody was surprised when my counsel excused Ellen Walker—to the spectators evidently her reply to the prosecutor had seemed so favorable to me. My counsel excused her, much to my relief, but in so doing he used up one of his peremptory challenges—the law allowed him only six. He used the other five to excuse five more women jurors. At the end of the second day the jury box was filled. There were four young men, two middle-aged men, and one old man, a bachelor. The other five were women jurors—a situation that we couldn't help.

I was on the witness stand four days. The prosecutor's cross-examination took up three—it was terribly gruelling. I am told that most of the questions were dictated overnight by the New York alienists that he'd brought in to testify. When I stepped down finally I fell, in a dead faint, into my chair. . . .

My counsel told me later that at the moment of fainting I looked more beautiful than ever . . . he told me not to worry . . . told me I was a brick, that I'd stood up under the cross-examination like a major . . . that we had them going.

But there was something in his tone that jarred. He leaned over toward his colleague, who sat next him. I leaned over, too, and listened.

"I don't like the attitude of those five women in the box," he said.

The next thing that I remember they had found me guilty . . . !

The women did it—I know the women did it. And I have now less than twelve hours to live. After that . . . !

Mr. Devon has just asked me—and he wants Miss Bates to put my answer down—what my first recollections of Dolf are—whether he was a dissipated man before I married him? And I an-

swer that I think not. Of course I could see nothing wrong with him then. But Dolf was a bad man in the end—he became a bad man—that is God's truth! Mr. Devon knows that. That is a fact—a fact I have the right to tell.

Mr. Devon asks again—he wants to know whether I can recall my honeymoon—with Dolf. My honeymoon—

he wants me to concentrate on that—to think about it hard. The day I married Dolf and all the rest. The first few weeks—he wants me to think—to think hard about it—to remember. . . . My honeymoon . . . good God, yes! . . . It all comes back to me . . . my honeymoon. . . . Oh, Dolf! . . . Oh, Dolf! . . . Oh, God!



THE WEAVER OF WORDS

By Amanda Benjamin Hall

HER garden-spot was hidden, quaint and queer,
 By hollyhocks more fortunately tall
 Than I, the child who clambered to be near
 And sunned me like an apple on the wall,
 And heard close by the intermittent fall
 Of water from the cool and lispig mouth
 Of some rare Inca fountain of the south.

Like blue dreams worn in saintly women's eyes
 Forget-me-not spread carpet for the trees,
 And fairy-frail and wonderfully wise
 All day there was an epic on the breeze,
 And shadows stirred to sudden ecstasies,
 The while I watched her making magic there
 With slow sweet drift of petals on her hair!



MEN and women are very different. A man's love is a woman's meal-ticket, a woman's love is a man's pastime, a man's whims make a woman smile, a woman's whims make a man commit murder. . . .



A MAN'S mother is his ideal; his sweetheart is his dream; his wife his awakening.



TO love is to doubt. To marry is to be sure.

THE EIGHTH WONDER OF THE WORLD

By James Reynolds

THE theaters were disgorging their crowds, tributaries to the vast human stream of Broadway. Taxicabs wove in and out of the hurrying throng. Suddenly there was an exclamation of amazement and the crowd rushed towards her, hemming her in on all sides. Cries of incredulity and bewilderment rose quick and fast. The gaping spectators were fairly stunned, for the like had not been seen on Broadway in twenty years. She was wheeling a baby carriage.



HOME

By David Morton

GOING all softly through the secret snow,
All hushed about with stillness in the wood,
There is no need to say the thing we know,
How life is glad for us and rich and good.
Despite the whiteness, strange upon the hill,
Our homing feet, unerring, keep the way,
Threading the iron twilight, keen and still,—
Paths learned and loved through many a happy day.

And suddenly, smell of the smoke drifts past,
Friendly and good; and then a window glows
Yellow across the evening, and at last
The little house close-kept among the snows!
Into the warm and mellow room we go,
All silent still, and glad of what we know.



IF loving interferes with business,—marry.



THE PERPLEXITY THAT CONFRONTED BELDEN

By M. L. Meeker

I

SHE had a little way of tasting things she ate, with her head on one side and the faintest suspicion of a smack, which he had once found utterly adorable. Then there was that little mannerism of hers, of trailing her laughter at the end in an upward, questioning note, like that of a petulant child.

Perhaps he had found her most absurdly lovable in what he teasingly called her "seeress air." When she had something she very much wished to tell him she would don an air of abstraction and answer him in monosyllables, all the while staring past him, her beautiful dark eyes seemingly fastened on mysterious and absorbing visions. If he asked her point-blank what was weighing on her mind, she would give a little start of surprise and say, "Nothing at all—why?" But tender and elaborately casual remarks on irrelevant subjects would inevitably elicit some bit of news, so absurdly inconsequent, that no one else would have given it a moment's thought. At such times he used to feel like kneeling to kiss her little feet, and staying there to worship forever. There was no one in the world so whimsically, so ridiculously adorable as Lucia!

Once, in the beginning, he had told her half-seriously that he had married her just because of those three absurd and delightful mannerisms.

"Men have married for less," she

had said, and laughed. And her laughter trailed into a plaintive, upward note, like that of a petulant child. Then he had smiled and held her close and decided that never before had there existed anyone so kissable as Lucia. . . .

II

TODAY, as he watched her tasting her fruit cocktail, her dainty head cocked to one side like a bird's, he was ashamed of the sudden ugly irritation which swept through him. He tried to analyze this emotion impersonally. After all, if Lucia wished to taste her food before she ate it, was it not a trifling matter, one which in no way affected him? Though it seemed today that he had never noted quite so audible a . . . yes, it was the only word to call it . . . a smack! In fact, on anyone else, it would seem atrocious manners. . . .

"It's good," decided Lucia, and popped a cherry into her mouth with the air of a naughty child gulping a sweet.

A year ago he would have smiled worshipfully at her across the table. Now he regarded her impassively, while a companionable demon within him whispered maliciously,

"Affectation—pure affectation!"

It soon became apparent, from Lucia's mysterious and withdrawn gaze, that she had something on her mind and that she wished him to ask her about it.

"Don't give her the satisfaction!" screamed the demon coarsely.

Belden, watching his wife as she sat opposite him, serenely unaware of the turmoil within him, wondered what she would say if she knew. To his overwrought nerves her dainty epicurean ways were exquisite refinements of torture. He told himself fiercely that he would rather have her use a toothpick or leave her spoon in her cup than flow, as she did, from one dainty pose into another.

His lips spoke commonplaces which his exasperated senses did not heed. Lucia responded in monosyllables, her dark eyes gazing dreamily into space. She was freighted with information highly exciting—to Lucia. The perverse demon within Belden took a grim satisfaction in an elaborate ignoring of her abstraction. At dessert it became unmistakable that he was not in the least interested in discovering her thoughts. She withdrew her eyes from the far spaces, regarded him a trifle coldly, and said:

"Oh, Belden, I had such an interesting conversation with Anne this morning . . ." Here Lucia tasted her ice doubtfully, decided it was worth eating, and continued: "I know you told me not to show it to anyone, but when you hear what she said about it . . ."

"About what, if I may be so bold as to ask?" said Belden with elaborate courtesy.

"About your new story, 'The Peacemaker,' of course. I know you won't mind a bit when you hear . . ."

"Do you mean to say," Belden interrupted savagely, "that you showed that to Anne—to Anne, of all people?"

"Don't use that horrid tone," Lucia remonstrated, shuddering delicately, "you know how I hate unpleasantness—why, yes, I read it to Anne this morning. We were talking about psychology, and I simply couldn't resist showing her the part—don't you remember?—where the man carries the woman who fainted into her bedroom. Anne thought your description of the way his mind works, as he stands look-

ing down at her, remarkable. I have never seen her so interested in anything before. Of course, she insisted on reading the whole story to see how it ended. She said . . ." Lucia hesitated a trifle.

"Go on. She said . . .?" prompted Belden grimly.

"Well, she said to tell you that she considered it a masterpiece, and that her entire sympathy is with the man. And I must say I'm surprised at her for taking such an immoral point of view," concluded Lucia a bit primly.

"Perhaps you misunderstood me," suggested Belden, with a fine edge on his voice which Lucia should have recognized, "when I told you I had particular reasons for not displaying that story to any of our friends; when I told you that I was even publishing it under a pen name, so that no one but you would ever know it was mine?"

"Oh, but I didn't misunderstand at all," Lucia explained volubly, misled by his quiet tone. "I was positive that you wouldn't mind Anne. She's such an intimate friend of ours. And then she's so broad-minded, and interested, you know, in things . . . in things," Lucia finished a bit lamely under her husband's angry gaze, and gave a little laugh, a laugh that trailed at the end. . . .

"Now," shrieked the demon triumphantly, "this is too much—isn't it . . . isn't it . . . isn't it?"

"I see," observed Belden in open scorn. "So because Anne is broad-minded—a word of offensive meaning, if any, and for which the originator should be strung up—and interested in 'things'—I suppose I understand the sort of 'things' you mean—you abuse my confidence, give away my secret to the one person who should not know it and is bound to repeat it . . ."

"But no, Belden, she promised . . ."

"Yes, you promised, too. Before withdrawing 'The Peacemaker' from publication, I can only say that from now on I shall make a point of keeping my affairs to myself, and away from the prying eyes and nasty minds of women in general!"

Overturning his chair as he arose, Belden stalked out of the room, giving himself the vulgar satisfaction of slamming the door behind him as he went.

III

HE had a more sound foundation for righteous wrath than Lucia could suppose. There were just four people in New York, he computed, as he seized his hat and cane and walked distractedly down the street, who knew that at Anne Peyton's dance, a month ago, Anne had fainted in a convenient and secluded corner, and that he had carried her to her room. Those four were Anne's butler, old Mrs. Scranton, Anne and himself. The butler did not matter; he was thrill-calloused, after years in the service of 'our best families.' As Mrs. Scranton (who was near-sighted) had not told so far, she probably would not think of the matter again, unless, he thought bitterly, it were recalled to her by a somewhat significant story ascribed to him, which she would undoubtedly amplify with lurid details of her own. Anne might tell, but probably would not, for many excellent reasons.

Belden alone knew how surprisingly she had revived, after a few moments, on that evening a month ago. But he wondered soberly how many others were aware of the existence of that easily overlooked and astonishingly accessible little outside door, placed so cunningly between the two large windows in Anne's boudoir. Had Lucia ever seen it? Obviously not, he decided.

However, under present circumstances, there was only one thing to do—to withdraw "The Peacemaker" from publication and so avert an ever-threatening calamity. With Lucia and Anne bosom friends, and both apt to impart his pen name (in confidence) to any number of intimates at any time, he would never have an unharassed moment. He smiled wryly as he considered returning the sizeable check which

he had received only two days ago and had already spent in anticipation.

As a matter of fact, there had been no reason for concealing the truth of the affair from Lucia from the beginning. As Belden had bent over Anne as she lay inert on the bed, he had ardently wished that Lucia might have been present—in spirit—to admire his indifference. Though Anne was admittedly beautiful, she had never attracted him. There was lacking in her, for him, some touch of glamour, some graceful *esprit*.

But as he watched life and expression quicken in her lovely face, he had contemplated, quite dispassionately, all the thoughts and emotions that might, in such a situation, throng to a man who was in love with Anne. He had been rather proud of them, he remembered—these impassioned imaginings of an imaginary self. Swinburne could have played with them in exquisite word melodies. Maupassant might have made with them another masterpiece. It was at this point that he had considered that he, Belden Sanford, might fit them, if not into a masterpiece, at least into a pretty story, one to cajole some harassed editor.

So meditating, he had made a rather pre-occupied and unsympathetic exit, after ascertaining that the patient was well enough to ring for her maid. He had not even remembered to glance again at the secret door, which on that night had been left ajar. Anne must have thought him a dull sort. . . .

And now she had read "The Peacemaker"!

He was both amused and enraged as he realized that she would, of course, ascribe to him all the bizarre emotions he had described in such detail. The message she had sent him by Lucia showed she was not displeased. She "sympathized with the man!"

Belden groaned as he recalled his highly-colored ending.

It was Lucia, and Lucia alone, who had brought this situation upon him! He quickened his pace in pure vexation. The most exasperating part of it

all was that his wrath must perforce turn in upon itself. It was now too late to tell Lucia the truth, while Anne would regard a true explanation as insulting, if she believed it at all. Lucia should be made to feel his displeasure, and there was no way of impressing it upon her. Anne . . . Here the perverse demon within him whispered alluringly. Belden stopped, hesitated. . . .

"By Jove, I might as well!" he muttered, and went into the first telephone booth to call up Anne.

IV

As he waited for Anne, his state of mind was curiously complex. He had telephoned her on a sudden unworthy impulse of revenge against Lucia. Anne had seemed surprised, though glad, to hear his voice. When he had asked, "By the way, how is your mysterious door?" she had sounded grave, had said she must see him—couldn't he come to tea? Belden, who immediately had an uncomfortable vision of eavesdropping maids and disagreeable little sandwiches, hastily reversed the invitation.

Now, while he waited, he was heartily regretting what he had done. He felt that he was making a fool of himself, that Anne, secretly amused, was going to talk to him 'sensibly'—unbearable thought! Worst of all, he found himself possessed with an overwhelming desire *not* to make a fool of himself before Anne. He suddenly and passionately wished Anne to like him, to talk to him about the little door. . . . Strange to say, he did not now think once of Lucia.

When Anne arrived, however, his dismal forebodings were immediately dissipated. He felt exhilarated in a way he had not been since his marriage. He regarded Anne with new vision, and found a new Anne, a bewitching blonde person with friendly blue eyes which he could not admire extravagantly enough. An old predilection for blondes swept over him again with sudden conviction.

He wondered why he had never no-

ticed before how smartly she dressed. Her dark frock, the soft white lace at her bosom, the sable fur she wore, fastening high against her chin, but permitting a glimpse of her smooth throat beneath, all intrigued and stimulated his imagination.

At Anne's suggestion, they had tea at a hotel known to most people for its tea room alone. It is a dim, perfumed place, full of cozy corners and cushions and whispering couples. Belden had always thought it extremely silly, a schoolgirl's dream of adult license. To-day, however, his very curiosity and uncertainty threw a romantic glamour over the situation, so that he failed to resent even the confidential air of the waitress who took his order.

As they seated themselves, Anne leaned forward to slip her fur back. As her shoulder touched his he found himself tingling like a boy. A warm, flower-like fragrance emanating from her seemed to confuse his mind with languorous images. He bent towards her. . . .

"Anne . . . Anne, dear," he murmured, and wondered curiously at his emotion as he spoke.

Suddenly the truth flashed upon him—He was in love with Anne!

"Belden, you must be careful," Anne whispered smilingly, "not here. . . ."

"No, not here," he repeated fondly.

The future seemed bright with romantic and daring adventures. He pictured to himself how kind he would be to Lucia, how forbearing with her foolish little ways. . . . He regarded Anne glowingly, marveled at her grace as she lifted her cocktail to her lips. . . .

Then suddenly his blood seemed to freeze in his veins. A sickening sense of calamity enveloped him as he watched Anne tasting her cocktail coquettishly, with her head on one side, and the tiniest suspicion of a smack. . . .

"It's good!" she decided, and laughed softly, a laugh trailing at the end into an upward, questioning note, like that of a petulant child.

"Why didn't you show me 'The Peacemaker' yourself?" she cooed gently. "I would have understood. Oh, that night at the dance, I thought—Belden, I thought . . ." She relapsed into silence, her lovely blue eyes gazed dreamily past him into space—it was the look of a seeress!

Belden knew his cue too well. She wished him to ask her what she was thinking of. He stared at her in hor-

rid fascination. Even from the midst of his shipwrecked sensibilities, he was convinced that Lucia did it much better. . . .

* * *

And now Belden is confronted with an odious and insoluble problem—Does Anne copy Lucia, or did he marry Lucia because of three hateful and exasperating mannerisms originated by Anne?



JILL, DO YOU REMEMBER?

By Harold Crawford Stearns

JILL, do you remember
How in wintry weather,—
Snowy, wild December,—
We would fare together.

To the little grill,
Always open wide,
Where was room for Jill,
Jack—and none beside?

Jill, do you recall
When the Spring, aquiver,
Woke each waterfall,
Valley, hill and river,

And we went a-wending,
Pals of Fancy Free,
Ours for just the spending
All eternity?

*Do you, too, remember still
All we planned and dreamed for, Jill?*



TO forget: that is to be young. To remember: that is to be old.



RECOMPENSE

By John Hamilton

I

THERE was an awkward smoke-blackened factory.
Behind it was a ridge of amethyst hills and the bay, glistening like a
giant diamond in the sun.

II

A child recoiled from an ugly, wriggling cocoon.
Out of it came a gorgeous butterfly, gold and scarlet.

III

He talked to a lank-limbed, thin-haired, grim-voiced woman.
She had a beautiful sister.



SOUTH WIND

By Hortense Flexner

THE South wind walked on Second Street,
The South wind wild and gay,
I crossed the door with flying feet,
The dusk was gray,
I ran as I would run to meet
My love this day.

The South wind bent to touch my hair,
I laughed outright;
There were strange gardens in the square,
And fields of light;
But O, I found not anywhere
My love this night!



JUDY O'GRADY

By Lilith Benda

I

THERE was something about them which suggested the lord and lady of feudal days. Enid Brooks' fair hair, severely parted and coiled high, gave the effect of a coronet. When they appeared in public, always she leaned upon her husband's arm with a certain helplessness, a certain aristocratic droop that only emphasized her queenly air. Her little, wistful mouth smiled a smile gracious and yet in no way cordial. Beneath fastidiously arched eyebrows, big brown eyes looked out at the world with an austere and unfriendly quality in their gaze. Whether in timidity or repugnance, she seemed always to be shrinking away from things, to be holding herself aloof from existence.

To her pale beauty there was an incorporeal note. She was one of those frail, ethereal women whose air of helplessness, coupled with a chill patricianism, establishes so tremendous a hold over men—just the sort a bachelor, who had ranged inordinately about, might acclaim the lady of his choice when a hankering for a family hearth sounded its infallible presagement of middle age.

Many a pretty face had fallen reproachfully at the betrothal announcement. Many a head wagged in doubt. The idea of Napier Brooks turned benedick and sternly faithful to the vows he had so eagerly and light-heartedly taken moved his friend to bantering mistrust. Speculation was heavy upon the subject of an inevitable Lorelei. Wagers were made as to when she would appear. For, despite his forty years and steel gray hair, Napier

Brooks, prone to peccadilloes and adept at the game, downed in the lists of affectional tourney every new aspirant that challenged his prowess. Tall, sun-bronzed, clean-timbered, he had the irresponsible smile of a boy and clear blue eyes that lighted naïvely at sight of a pretty woman. With an innate courtliness and a disarming deference of manner, it was part of his charm ingenuously to take for granted the conqueror's rôle that was always conceded him. And everyone believed that, once the novelty of the thing wore off, his wife's cold beauty and fragile aloofness would become irksome to a degree potent to impel him toward the light lapses of bachelor days.

But to those who had doubted, gradually it became apparent that he had put foibles behind him, and remained rigorously true to the conjugal engagements. More, and what especially astounded the mistrusters, far from unbending before her husband's volatile charm, Enid Brooks, with a tenacity of will incongruous to her fragility and helplessness, unquestionably dominated him.

She became the leader of a set that allowed of no compromise even with the most prudent of free-and-easys. She took a fancy to the Brooks family estate on Long Island, with its formal gardens, colonial mansion and big, cold rooms, and established herself there with never so much as a sojourn in New York for the winter season. Her entertainments were few, formal and somewhat dreary, and yet rarely were her invitations rejected.

Even Mrs. Frayne—Mrs. Julie, as the pretty, sparkling, black-eyed little

widow was known to her friends—for all her yawns and pouts appeared at Enid's impressive dinners.

"Salutary self-torture, like a Lenten *devoir*," she sighed, and curbed her spirits, suppressed her laughter, assumed a meek and chastened mood.

Enid's dinners presupposed chastened moods. Neither dancing nor bridge were permitted, neither cigarettes nor cocktails. Rare old vintages were charily served, but never a sparkling wine.

"All effervescence barred here!" Mrs. Julie, who liked champagne, once murmured experimentally into Napier Brooks' ear. But he only looked at her askance and changed the subject.

And just as by virtue of a delicate chilliness of soul she dominated her guests, so everything about her home reflected Mrs. Brooks' personality. The house was decorated in chaste grays and pastel blues. She permitted no furniture more opulent than Heppelwhite. Her husband's well-beloved Renoir was frowned upon and relegated to his study, together with the Chinese vases, glorious *sang-de-bœufs* and mirror blacks and *clair-de-lune* whites.

When mildly he protested, "I find something nasty in Oriental things," she murmured, arching her fine eyebrows, leaning with a gracious dependence upon his arm. And the vases gave way before the old Chelsea she loved.

Even her servants reflected Mrs. Brooks—all quiet, low-voiced, well-mannered, well-trained. There was Jennie, for instance, a treasure among maids.

Stoical, inscrutable, silent and swift-moving, something about this Jennie's deliberate gestures and stately bearing suggested the hieratic poise of East Indian women. She spoke rarely, but in a low, musical voice that seemed not to tally with her plebeian utterances—with her "ma'ams" and "aint's" and "was yous." She smiled rarely, a slow, grave, lazily lovely smile. Her eyes were big, and placid, and gray, the rosy iridescence of her skin meetly tem-

pered by a scattering of freckles. She had the hair of an Irish peasant, black, wavy, coarse, but with a satin sheen to it. Tall and supple, deep-chested and broad-shouldered, she exhaled a certain docility and protectiveness that made her, for all a dangerous loveliness, an ideal handmaiden and a subservient foil for Mrs. Brooks' mignon perfection.

"I'd be lost without you, Jennie," her mistress would murmur graciously, a little proud of her success with this girl who had come to her, eighteen and uncouth, and developed into so competent a servant. No former maid had dressed the fair hair so elegantly, had coiled it so deftly into a sort of pale gold coronet. No other maid had been so apt with the menthol stick and *eau de cologne* that banished an occasional headache.

And Jennie, moreover, displayed a commendable instinct for self-improvement. By degrees "ma'am" became madam, and the "ain'ts" less frequent. She even attained a feeble smattering of French, understood what her lady meant by *malaise* and *migraine*. Her finger-nails were daintily manicured. There were times when she abandoned the regal bearing, which, after all, was a shade too self-assured for her station, for a somewhat ungainly imitation of Mrs. Brooks' aristocratic droop. She appeared to revere her mistress and to blend her humility with a maternal solicitude.

The maternal streak, indeed, was very apparent in Jennie. A characteristic gesture of hers betrayed it—a quick, eager outstretching of the hands, as if to receive something long denied her. And then, too, she was always singing, so softly as to be scarcely audible, a little lullaby:

"Toora loora looral, toora loora li,
Toora loora looral, hush, now don't
you cry,
Toora loora looral, toora loora li,
Toora loora looral, that's an Irish lul-
laby."

Enid would find herself humming

the tune. At times she heard her husband whistling it.

Napier Brooks whistled a great deal, whistled loudly, whistled blithely, as if to express his contentment with the rôle of country gentleman and happy husband. After five years of marriage he remained as buoyant and carefree as ever. For a certain period, some two years before, there had been indications of approaching dullness and middle-aged gloom. He had neglected his horseback-riding, moped at the fireside during the partridge season. There had been a puffiness about his chin, a gray note to the healthy brown pallor, an unmistakable hint of a paunch. But after a few months the old gleam returned to his eyes, the whole-hearted ring to his laughter. The scoffers and doubters were forced to pay tribute to Enid Brooks. For once, a rake had been reformed.

And then all of a sudden came the blow. At last a lapse! At last a Lórelei! . . . It was Mrs. Julie Frayne.

II

It was twilight of a summer day, the hour when Napier Brooks generally returned from his afternoon canter over the estate. Before a narrow mirror the maid Jennie was adjusting a crisp white cap, when a peremptory ring summoned her to her mistress' room. With the detached, deliberate air that made all her movements, however swift, seem premeditated and slow, she tied her apron and slipped through the halls. She was paler than usual today, and what little color was in her face faded away when she entered Mrs. Brooks' room, and saw her mistress standing before her.

The lady wore a dark gray dressing-gown, rigorously opaque, high of neck, long of sleeve, and hanging in loose folds to the floor. Her face was a grayish white, the little wistful mouth drawn into a tight line, the big brown eyes ablaze and staring in a dazed way at a menthol stick she held in her hand.

The girl uttered a little exclamation

of concern, patted a bed-pillow invitingly.

After a long silence, with her eyes never wavering from the menthol stick, Mrs. Brooks spoke. Her voice was strangely guttural and low.

"I shan't dine tonight. Indisposed."

"Very good, madam," Jennie answered, with a faint, frightened gasp.

"Is Mr. Brooks in the library?"

"Yes, madam, he's just after coming in—er—" A flush of pained embarrassment suffused her cheeks. "I mean—I mean he returned a little while ago."

"Ask him to come here at once."

"Yes, madam."

After she had closed the door, the vague alarm in the girl's eyes became sheer terror. She ran lightly through the halls crooning, for all her fright, the little song so constantly at her lips: "*Toora loora looral, hush, now don't you cry—*"

Napier Brooks was deep in the evening papers. So silently and swiftly did the girl approach him that he failed to look up even when she was at his side, started at her low "Beg pardon, sir," smiled his brilliant smile.

"Yes, Jennie?"

"Mrs. Brooks wishes to speak to you right away, sir."

He arose at once, with the scrupulous response to his wife's every wish which he unfailingly displayed. Something on the girl's face, though, made him pause as he was turning away.

"Anything wrong, Jennie?"

"She seems awful angry, sir."

Across the man's face a sudden alarm flashed. His lips tightened. But it was characteristic of him not to hesitate at the prospect of an unpleasant encounter. He hurried from the room too quickly even to note the shamed flush mounting to Jennie's forehead, to hear her apologetic murmur:

"I meant to say—she seems very angry, sir."

The concern upon his face deepened into astonishment when he opened his wife's door. Half-way across the room he stopped short with a mut-

tered "damn!" For Enid was standing just as Jennie had left her, her eyes fixed upon the menthol stick which had fallen to the floor. She looked very young, very helpless with her fair hair simply parted over the pale, pure face. And this fragility and ethereality rendered all the more sinister the livid, oddly twisted mouth and great, blazing eyes. She seemed desperately to attempt to conceal, with a display of icy anger something within her torn by grief, mortally wounded, cruelly outraged.

When her husband entered, she raised her hands to her throat, twisting and untwisting the little frail fingers. Her eyes closed, and the deep, purple shadows beneath them stood out like ugly bruises. She tottered a little, but when Brooks started toward her, immediately shrank away as from something unspeakably vile.

"There isn't going to be a divorce." The man winced at her unnatural, guttural voice. "There isn't going to be a divorce. I don't believe in divorce. But I am leaving your house tonight, and a separation suit will follow. The—the notoriety will be unpleasant, of course, but it would be casting aside the principles I hold most sacred not to face it. I believe that evil-doers must be exposed and punished, not protected."

Methodically she continued to twist and untwist her fingers. While she spoke her gaze had been fixed on the floor. Now slowly she drew herself up to her full height and raised eyes, glittering like the eyes of a madwoman, to her husband's face. "A trull's a trull, whether she be your trull or the footman's. A trull's a trull, and I mean all the world to know this one for such!"

Napier Brooks looked shamefaced and uncomfortable. And yet about him there hovered a suggestion of the old irresistible, irresponsible Napier Brooks of bachelor days. He appeared impatient to have done with this unpleasantness, a little shocked at his lady's unprecedentedly forcible vocabulary, and ready for a humorous confession, a

laughing repentance, ready to be forgiven. His expression served only to goad his wife to cold fury. Beneath her breath she shot out her next words:

"I have all Julie Frayne's letters to you!"

On the instant his face went white. A harrowing dread widened his eyes. And the wife's thin lips curled in malignant satisfaction as gradually his face assumed an aged and harassed look.

"I have all Julie's letters to you," she repeated more loudly, more harshly. "And they shall be read in open court. They shall be printed in every newspaper in the land. . . . A referee, sealed papers, no scandal—that's the usual procedure, I believe, isn't it?—but I mean this scandal to be blazoned throughout the country. You and your—your—you and that thing shall pay a price for your filthy little affair!"

"You couldn't do that, Enid." Hardly above a whisper he brought out the words, slowly, timidly, as if with difficulty. "You are too—too fine-fibred for that sort of thing. A woman's good name was in my keeping. If, by a criminal carelessness, I've placed the power to disgrace her in your hands, surely you wouldn't stoop—you shan't stoop to exposing her like—"

"Oh, shan't I?" Her voice rose to a feeble scream. Beads of perspiration stood out on her forehead. And the black shadows beneath her eyes enhanced the maniacal glitter there. Strangely, enough, too, her every word and glance manifested the outraged love that was spurring this fragile woman to vulgar, irrepressible fury.

Mid-Victorian to her fingertips, a wife of the old and desuete school, this abrupt discovery of a gambol among forbidden paths threw her whole existence into chaos.

"Oh, shan't I, though? . . . This afternoon the blow came. Life means nothing now. The world's gone black. And in the face of it all you think only of your—of Julie Frayne's good name! Quite by accident I came upon the letters. . . . Oh, but you were care-

less! Criminally careless—true. And you shall pay for your carelessness! I mean to have our accounts very evenly balanced, Napier Brooks!"

Now hard, dry sobs shook her. Like a demented creature, she continued to twist and untwist her fingers until the joints cracked, to pinch and pull the fair flesh at her throat until bruises stood out livid against the whiteness.

"I chose you—from among all the others—you with your forty years and your evil reputation. I forgave the things that had gone before—trusted—believed—the promises—the vows . . . Senseless gabble! Low lies! I gave you myself, my all—my all—" She lingered over the melodramatic phrases that rise to the lips of reserved beings under the stress of an emotional outburst—"my all—my youth, and my life, and my love! In return I thought that at least you'd offer a—square deal!"

She paused for an instant, shuddered and continued even more shrilly:

"That that low thing should come to my house as my guest, as my friend—and that you, my husband, whom I—that the two of you, in my house—under my roof . . . begin a flirtation that's resulted in shame—in degradation—filth! The squalor of it all! . . . The filth! The filth!"

"Enid, you'll have yourself ill."

As she reeled, he caught her in his arms, but with a quick twist of her body she freed herself and, laughing softly like a distracted creature, ran across the room toward the room beyond.

On the threshold, abruptly she stopped, arrested by something that caught her eye there. A low wail, like the cry of a wounded animal at bay, escaped her. She darted beyond his vision, and a moment later reappeared in the doorway. Her face was even more distorted than before.

"You cur! You common thief! Pick the lock—of my desk," she went on, incoherent between sobs. "Pry open my desk . . . like a common burglar!"

Her husband raised his arms at his sides and let them drop helplessly.

"Enid, you're mystifying. I never—"

"Like a burglar," she cried on. "Pick the lock—pry the desk open—steal the letters, Julie's letters, my letters—cad's trick, pry open the desk—Julie's letters. . . . All you think of—her good name—steal what belongs to me—low thief—steal Julie's letters—"

She lurched forward and would have fallen on her face had he not sprung across the room and caught her in his arms. . . .

And of a sudden, with a ludicrous abruptness, it was all over—the hysteria, the indictments, the strife. Precipitant upon her discovery that she was thwarted in her project of retribution came that breaking point of her outburst which would have resulted in a swoon but for her husband's arms. For Napier Brooks' arms about a woman put him immediately at an overpowering advantage. The old gallantry and self-assurance seemed to return to him as he encircled the slender waist; a gallantry mollified, however, by deferential courtliness. And it was no longer harassment nor alarm, but a very real solicitude for this woman brought back from the point of insensibility that kindled in his eyes. Dazed, bruised, in a sort of trance, she made no effort to release herself. Her head was thrown back across his arm, her plaintive white face upturned to his. And Enid's plaintive white face upturned to a man's put her immediately at an overpowering advantage.

Gradually the dry sobs subsided. Gradually a little color broke in upon the deathlike pallor. She blinked her eyes and looked at him with a quaint shyness, as if recognizing him as her husband for the first time that day. She raised her hand and let it brush his cheek before it fell back inertly. Like a tired child she sighed a heavy sigh. And the wistful, thin-lipped little mouth smiled faintly.

Her very languor, as she lay there in his arms, seemed to irradiate the terrible power of this woman, the relentless power of her weakness and helplessness, of that delicate patricianism

all the more apparent now for the insane outburst that had died away into a sort of numb serenity. As he smoothed the hair back from her damp forehead, Napier Brooks seemed unequivocally to surrender before this power, and Enid to read the surrender in his eyes, to accept it, to absolve him, to bask a little at the prospect of unwavering worship from this big, handsome man whom every woman regarded with inviting eyes—unwavering worship potent to obliterate the insult he had inflicted upon her wifehood.

He carried her to the bed, laid her gently down.

"Enid," he whispered, "won't you just this once more trust me, dear? Accept my word that this sort of thing will never occur again? . . . Just this once more, dear?"

A frail hand sought his. The thin lips smiled.

"The incident's closed, Napier. We will never speak of it again. We'll begin all over."

He sighed with relief, smiled his brilliant, caressful smile. But for the veriest fraction of a second an expression crossed his face that made him look like a creature delivered from a red-hot purgatory, only to be thrust into an icy hell.

After a moment she rubbed her forehead, uttered a poignant moan.

"Mind ringing for Jennie, please?"

Her eyelids drooping wearily dismissed him. On tiptoe he walked from the room. And in the hall he encountered the maid, Jennie. Silent and swift as ever, with that effect of deliberation, she was coming toward the room—"Ra loora looral, that's an Irish lullaby," she crooned under her breath, and never raised her eyes as he passed.

III

AN hour later he looked into his wife's room, where she lay just as he had left her, redolent of *eau de cologne* and asleep from exhaustion. He tiptoed away, lit a cigar, and set out on his customary after-dinner stroll.

It was a clear, cool midsummer evening with a half-moon sailing high in the sky, and the air sweet with mignonne. Now and again came an owl's plaintive cry, blending with the croon of frogs and the crickets chirping. The occasional sound of an automobile horn in the distance only intensified the quiet here. An evening with a throbbing aliveness to it that cried out for youth and rose-hued adventure. . . . Napier Brooks heaved a dull sigh. Tonight there was a middle-aged sag to his shoulders.

He walked out beyond the formal gardens into fields, all fragrant in the evening dewiness, of new-mown hay. Again he sighed his heavy, tired sigh, tossed away his cigar and turned back, his head lowered in so deep an abstraction that he failed to see a woman running lightly toward him, a woman in black with her apron and frilled cap gleaming silvery white in the moonlight. She was close to him when she outstretched her hands as if pleading for something relentlessly withheld. She was at his elbow before her soft "Beg pardon, sir," aroused him.

"Ah, Jennie!"

At the sight of her his face fell, his eyes shifted. And meeting his discomfiture her brow wrinkled in perplexity, a deep flush spread over her face, and into the clear gray eyes there crept a look of pain. Awkwardly she shifted from foot to foot. And her proud bearing became a clumsy imitation of Mrs. Brooks' patrician droop. When she spoke it was in a tremulous, fluttering voice just above a whisper:

"I just followed you, sir, to give you these. It's the letters—nine of 'em, all of 'em, all in the gray envelopes with the purple seals, all just like they were when they was taken from your table drawer, sir . . . all of 'em here, sir."

"Ah!" A vast relief shone from his eyes. He took the packet greedily, examined it, slipped it into his pocket. "How did you manage to er—obtain them, Jennie?"

"When she was in her bath this afternoon,—Mrs. Brooks, sir. Between

fetching her crystals and passing her things, I picked the desk lock open with a nail file. It was awful bold, but I knew things was—were going bad for you. . . . It's taking a liberty to ask, but will you see to it that they're burnt tonight, sir? You're absent-minded, and careless about such things. You run awful big—very big—risks, and the next time we might be out of luck."

He nodded as if in dismissal. And reluctantly she turned away, only an instant later to approach him, smiling her grave smile. The big gray eyes looked a little reproachfully into his. "Maybe for a few weeks, you better play it cozy—oh." Upon her face the flush deepened with this lapse into pantry patois. "I mean, be discreet. Tell her not to write any more letters, sir. Too risky. . . . But there's a baker's shop on the main road only a little ways from the house where the servants do their 'phoning, and get their calls, seeing as Mrs. Brooks don't allow it. If she'd call up there, Mrs. Julie—that is, Mrs. Frayne, sir—if she'd call up there evenings and ask for me, I could take messages any time. I'm to be trusted, sir. You can tell her I'm to be trusted."

"Can't quite make you out, Jennie." Puzzled and embarrassed, the man met the eager entreaty on her face.

"I'm to be trusted," she repeated.

He shook his head. "Thanks, Jennie, but there won't be any need for that sort of thing in the future."

And he laughed a somewhat shamefaced, boyish laugh that seemed to invite sympathy and encouragement to sustain him in his resolution.

But Jennie started indignantly. Her timidity and embarrassment left her. Vigorously she shook her head.

"Oh, I suppose she made you promise never to do it again, didn't she? Oh, but can't you see you mustn't keep no such promise? Buck up, sir! Why, you'd get old! Can't you remember how it was eighteen months ago come July,—January, remember? And the house party here for the skating. You was—you were getting old; your col-

lars were too tight, and the vests—waistcoats—didn't fit. And the lines, sir, and the wrinkles!"

Her voice was no longer a tremulous whisper. It rang out rich, and clear and sweet. Again, unconsciously she outstretched her hands in that strange, yearning, maternal gesture which seemed a plea for permission to solace and gladden. She had stepped very close to him, peering through the gloom into his face when of a sudden the awkward slouch that imitated Mrs. Brooks became again a queenly poise. Perhaps it was a responsive gleam in his eyes, perhaps only the witchery of the dew-laden night air, but of a sudden all the clumsiness and restraint and alarm that seemed to enmesh her, fell away into a glad abandon. Her eyes lighted. Her lips curled. Her shoulder grazed him. A low, jubilant cry rang out. She threw her strong young arms about him, pressed her lips to his, stood so for a long, still moment, motionless save for that exultant tremor, silent save for a glad, inarticulate murmuring.

"Boss!" she whispered at last, "Oh, my boss, but it's good to be—like this—again!"

There was a stirring in the branches overhead,—nothing more than a night-bird or a bat. And yet Brooks started nervously, averted his head. For a moment he had held her eagerly, as if comforted and heartened by the simple innocence of her. But with that stirring in the branches she became no more than another phase of a problem already replete with exasperating intricacies. As his arms fell away from her, she looked up quickly.

"Do you ever miss me, boss? I mean just once in a while? Do you ever get lonely for me like you used?"

"Often, Jennie." But the beseechment on her face shamed his complacent smile and glib lie.

She laughed softly, let her head rest against his shoulder, relapsed into service slang.

"That's a lot of noise. I mean—well, you don't miss me, so don't say you do. When it's between you and me there's

no need to twist the truth, dear—sir.”

Still he remained unresponsive and out of countenance. The look of pain deepened in her eyes.

“Would you like,” she went on, turning her face away from him. “Would you like to give me notice? I mean—well, it must be a kind of a nuisance like this, having me around, always reminding you—and you having trouble enough with her in there. They must be lots of worry to a man like you, sir,—women must, what with their ‘Do you love me’s’ and ‘Do you miss me’s.’ Don’t know what made me act that way. Guess it must’ve just been talking to you again,—and the night-time and all.”

As half-heartedly he slipped an arm about her, she continued with more assurance:

“Don’t believe I’d ought to give notice just yet, boss. I’m thinkin’ I’d better stick around for a while and sort of—sort of look out for you. Because you’re careless with letters and things. You’d give yourself away. Mrs. Brooks won’t never leave you. And you mustn’t keep your promise. There’s trouble coming ’less everything’s managed smooth. Somebody’s got to watch out for you and—” She broke off abruptly, faced him again. “I only seen her once or twice. What’s she like, sir? Mrs. Julie? Mrs. Frayne?”

The man smiled. It was the boy that still lurked in him, the ardent boy who, without a thought of giving pain sought a trustworthy confidante, that answered.

“Cunning little creature, Jennie. Always laughing, always cheering one up. Funny, frothy, little thing. Mop of black curls tumbling to her waist. Dainty and devil-may-care. No dreadful depths, no devastating refinement of soul. Just skims through life. . . . Of course, you don’t understand what I’m saying, but—well, she’s a cunning little thing, Jennie.”

An owl hooted. As if from an immeasurable distance came the sound of an automobile horn which only accentuated the evening tranquillity, with

the dewiness, and the night breeze, and the scent of new-mown hay. In the moonlight the girl stood, straight and tall, swaying a little from side to side. Under her breath she was humming the little lullaby, “*Toora loora loora, toora loora li.*”

Once again she outstretched her hands in her strange madonna gesture. She was in a reverie. She appeared to be listening, and waiting, and pleading for something that without protest she had put behind her. For a full minute the man looked at her with a certain compassion that was not as much compassion as regret, and not so much regret as respect. At length, “How old are you?” he asked sharply.

“Twenty, sir.”

“And what are you going to do, Jennie? You can’t,—dear child, you can’t just stay here and—er—look out for me. I’ve noticed these last few months—I’ve seen how without a word, without even asking for an explanation, you went back to the ‘sirs’ and blotted out that one year. It isn’t fair to you, girl, and I can’t allow—”

“What am I going to do, you’re asking?” she broke in, “why, if you say so or no, I guess I’ll just stick around, sir. . . . There’s still the man keeps the garage in the village, if that’s what you mean. But I’m not thinkin’ of marryin’. You can’t be seeing men like that, you know after—after you’ve known a gentleman.”

All her pride in him shone from her eyes.

“Boss, don’t you worry about me. Why, all the months it was going on I kept thinkin’ to myself, ‘Here’s something you’ll remember, here’s something you’ll always have to remember.’ I knew it wouldn’t last, sir—not with a gentleman! I was always waiting for a Mrs. Julie to come along. . . . You remember, I always called you boss? And you’ll always be my boss, just that, sir. I couldn’t ever call you Napier. It—it would’ve been—” She swallowed hard, blinked her eyes, turned away her face. The clear voice fell to a whisper. “It would’ve been kind

o'—kind o' like callin' God by his first name."

Lightly she swayed toward him, leaned against his shoulder, a sort of apology for this momentary emotional display in the reassuring pat of his arm.

"What am I going to do? . . . Just stick around, so's you don't get in another mess. And when you get on to the tricks of it—then I'll give notice, sir."

With a very genuine tenderness, Napier Brooks took her hand. "*C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre,*" he murmured.

She stood very still, humming her song. A peculiar alertness stole into her face. The brow wrinkled.

"That is," she said at length, "that is. That is."

"What, dear? What is?"

She nodded with a little chuckle.

"That is—that is. *C'est*—that is."

"Oh." His handsome face laughed into hers. For the first time that evening he displayed no discomfort, no embarrassment in her presence. "This is like old times, Jennie—the French lessons. . . . *Magnifique*," he pronounced slowly. There was something reminiscent and sweet in her nervous little laugh, and shake of the head. "*Mag-ni-fique*," he repeated, making the g hard.

"Magnificent!" she exclaimed, all eager smiles. "That is magnificent."

"*Mais*—but—"

"But that is not. . . . *ce—n'est—pas*, it is not . . . and the last word?"

"War."

"That is, or it is, magnificent, but that is, or it is, not war." Her brow still wrinkled, she looked up into his face. "What's it mean, boss?"

Then he drew her to him, put his arm around her, spoke very gently.

"Jennie, there's war ahead for a girl like you, dear,—battle after battle. You've got to learn to fight. You can't just stick around and—er—look out for me. You're twenty. There'll be others. There's life ahead for you—and battles. It's very lovely of you, but I can't have you—"

"Now!" With a finger laid lightly against his lips, she checked him. "Now you're talkin' like an oldish man, sir! You mustn't do that. Buck up! Listen to me, now—listen. . . ."

She hesitated for a little, as if she were searching intently for words of assuagement that would still his misgivings once and for all.

Presently a low, glad laugh rang out in the stillness. Her face, over which a silvery iridescence played, lighted with a new, serene conviction. Rapt and sweet, trembling a little in the moonlight, she met the shamefaced tenderness in his eyes. And when at last she spoke, each homely phrase was fraught with persuasive eloquence, sounded a clear, triumphant assurance.

"If there's to be others, it's got to be gentlemen like you. Once it's been a gentleman,—you can't have it—no one else. Maybe there's others ahead, and maybe there isn't. I don't know. I'm not thinkin' of that. . . . I'm thinkin' I've got something to remember always. I'm thinkin' I can't never be a lady, for all the grammar books, and French lessons, and manicures in the world. And I'm thinkin' I can look out for you better in my own common way. I'm thinkin' I'll always be proud because—eighteen months ago, in January, remember!—it was me who took hold of you when you was—were going stale, when the collars were too tight, and the vests—waistcoats—didn't fit. Going stale for a little laughing and brightness, what with everything so prim and proper and glum, and you listening to every 'you mustn't do this' and 'you mustn't do that' from that chilly one in there! I'm thinkin' you were my first, and you owe your first a square deal. Mrs. Julie ain't—isn't important. It'll be another soon. But I'm thinkin' you won't keep that promise. You're going to let me take messages at the 'phone in the baker's shop. . . . You're going to buck up!"

She was radiant, her eyes starry and scintillant in the darkness. Her laughter sounded musically. Before he could put in a word, she went on:

"Oh, I know the stuff they'd all say, them that creeps with their faces to the ground, no matter if it's in the scullery or in the parlor. 'The woman pays' they say, and 'what a price the woman pays' and 'men are brutes' and 'life is cruel.' . . . A lot of noise! You hear it with long words in the masters' rooms and I hear it in the kitchen what with cook dronin' away nights, and His Nibs—that's the butler, sir,—whinin' out what a wicked place the world is for girls, and sneakin' behind the pantry door to snicker, and grab at you as you pass. I know what they'd say about you, taking a girl, and a good girl, and droppin' her. . . . How you was a brute to make her turn up her nose at the thought of a home of her own, and a man of her own. And I'd tell 'em something if ever they started, sir! I'd tell 'em a thing or two!"

The exaltation of creatures who live in their memories swept over her face.

"It was me that led you on, eighteen months ago come January,—remember? With the house-party here for the skatin', and the big fires goin', and you mopin' in your study, and never raisin' your eyes when I fetches you the hot toddy that day—remember? Me with my heart poundin' wild fer fear, but smilin' brazen-like, and sidlin' up, and chokin' out, 'Buck up, boss. . . . Remember? . . . That was the start, and this is the end. And I'm proud now like I was then. And it's you that's made me proud. And I'm going to stick around, and look out for you for a while. Else it wouldn't be a square deal, boss.'"

A nod of finality topped her words, a laugh, a sigh, a handclasp. Straight, tall, jubilant, she stood beside him. Her

frilled cap, silvered by the moonlight, shone like a coronet. For a moment they looked into one another's eyes. There was something about the two which suggested the lord and lady of feudal days.

"A home of your own, and a man of your own, and your head in the air with nothing to hide, and children—and a victrola and such. . . ." As if for the last time she were evoking the silly ghost of a silly life-dream, she whispered the words. As if for the last time she were watching and waiting, and pleading for something all the more precious for its insignificance, something that without protest or regret she had put behind her, she half-outstretched her arms, and let them fall gently at her sides. She stepped close to him, caught his hand, brushed his cheek with soft lips. "What's all that, once it's been a gentleman?—Burn the letters. . . . And buck up, boss!"

Before he could speak, before he could stop her, she had slipped away among the bushes, silent and swift as ever, humming her little song.

IV.

For a full five minutes Napier Brooks stood motionless. Then he lit a cigar, breathed deep of the evening fragrance, strolled leisurely toward the house. About half way, the path twisted, so that for a few yards it ran close to a low, stone wall that skirted the Brooks estate. The man's eyes chanced upon a brightly lighted little baker's shop across the road. He paused for a moment, threw back his shoulders and walked briskly on, whistling at the top of his lungs Jennie's "*Toora-loora*" lullaby.



CIRAGE ET GANTS BLANCS

By Emile Delta

LE clarion de garde vient de sonner l'appel aux sergents-majors. C'est l'heure du rapport.

Le colonel a pénétré dans la salle affectée spécialement à la dictée des ordres. Il y est entouré du commandant, du capitaine-adjutant major, de l'adjutant, quand les "doubles" arrivent à leur tour et forment demi-cercle devant la table, face aux grands chefs.

"— Ecrivez !...".

Un cahier cartonné dans la main gauche, un crayon préalablement taillé avec soin dans l'autre main, messieurs les sergents-majors s'escriment, debout, à enfler le mieux possible les phrases ronchonées dessous le képi cinq fois galonné d'or du colon :

"En raison du mauvais temps, aucun exercice extérieur ne pouvant avoir lieu, une revue des hommes en tenue de sortie sera passée cette après-midi, par les capitaines, dans les chambrées".

Dehors, il pleut, peu, mais sans interruption, et depuis plusieurs heures. Le sol est abominablement détrempé : c'eût été sottise, vraiment, de demander aux petits biffins de patauger dans la boue histoire de leur apprendre à tendre le jarret.

Le tableau de service de l'après-midi est donc simple à remplir... Pourtant, si vous aviez assisté à tout le branle-bas dont, la lecture du rapport terminée, les chambrées devinrent les théâtres affolés ! Ah, mes amis !...

Car il faut non seulement, en l'occurrence, que l'uniforme endossé soit revê tupropre "comme un sou", ainsi que le proclamait, jadis, une chanson. Il faut aussi que la chambre commune soit propre "comme un salon" — ainsi que l'a prescrit pé-remp-toi-re-ment un

jeune sous-lieutenant frais émoulu de Saint-Cyr, très mondain, mais insuffisamment intelligible, ses subordonnés ignorant, pour la plupart, ce qu'est, dans la belle société, "un salon".

Heureusement, le caporal de chambrée, un ancien, compte dix-huit mois de laine rouge sur les avant-bras ; il enroule comme pas un des chaussettes russes et possède dans l'art de présenter le dortoir de son escouade un savoir faire qui lui a toujours valu les félicitations les plus vives et les plus méritées.

Le râtelier d'armes, la planche à pain, le parquet, les bat-flancs sont vigoureusement cirés, les vitres des fenêtres soigneusement essuyées ; les paquetages et les lits doivent être rigoureusement carrés : un "plumard" bien fait, ça flatte et séduit du premier coup l'œil de l'officier instructeur. Pour couronner le tout, un bel alignement des couchettes ; qu'il n'y en ait pas une qui dépasse l'autre, autrement, l'effet est gâché.

Et puis, il y a encore les pieds des chalits, ces espèces de petits tréteaux en fonte sur lesquels la literie est édiflée. Ils sont noirs par nature et un jour de revue aucune souillure ne saurait les ternir.

Les caporeaux qui sont riches en même temps que passionnés pour leurs fonctions achètent volontiers un paquet de mine de plomb de dix centimes dont les fameux pieds sont barbouillés. Mais tous les caporaux ne sont point riches ou, si certains le sont, ceux-là ne se montrent pas prodiges au profit de "l'ordinaire".

Comment remédier à la pénurie de la mine de plomb ? Par l'emploi du

cirage. Oui, le troupier français cire les pieds de châlit avec le même produit et de la même façon que ses godillots. Et ça reluit, je vous en fiche mon billet!

Donc, tout était en ordre et brillait dans la chambre. Le caporal, satisfait, attendait sans crainte la venue de ses supérieurs.

Si la revue est ordonnée pour 3 heures, le sous-lieutenant arrive, habituellement, le premier, une heure auparavant; le lieutenant suit, une demi-heure plus tard; enfin, le capitaine paraît à l'heure tapant. Les officiers ont, d'ailleurs, été précédés de l'adjudant et du sergent de semaine aux tonitruantes observations et aux menaces effarantes; aussi, quand les éperons du "capiston" résonnent sur le parquet de la chambre étincelant comme un miroir, la mise au point est comète.

Les magasins d'habillement occupant le rez-de-chaussée du bâtiment, la chambrée se trouve au premier étage; d'où un supplément de soucis et de soins, l'escalier réclamant, comme tout le reste, un "parfait état de propreté".

Soudain, le caporal pâlit: les barreaux de la rampe de l'escalier n'ont pas été noircis!... Vite, deux hommes armés de leur brosse à cirage sont commandés et s'acquittent, avec une hâte fébrile, de ce travail d'embellissement.

Il était temps! Le sous-lieutenant franchit, en ce moment précis, la porte du quartier.

C'est un bel officier, svelte, élégant sous l'uniforme.

Et ses gants! Admirez leur éclatante blancheur...

Il approche. Il a gagné l'escalier.

"— Fixe!"... L'officier est là.

"— Quel est l'imbécile qui a f... du cirage plein l'escalier?"

"— C'est moi, mon lieutenant" répond le caporal, qui a conscience de sa responsabilité.

"— Triple buse! voyez dans quel état sont mes gants. Si le capitaine me f... aux arrêts, c'est pas vous qui garderez la chambre à ma place. Idiot! ciétin!... Vous aurez quatre jours de salle de police!..."

L'infortuné caporal ne bronche pas. Il baisse timidement les paupières, devinant de quelle catastrophe il s'est fait l'artisan involontaire.

... Le soir, résigné, il descendit coucher à la salle de police.

Il en fut de même quatre soirs de rang. Et c'est seulement, semble-t-il, dans le silence méditatif du cachot que le malheureux, l'âme endeuillée, découvrit l'influence tragique et... noire, qu'une boîte de cirage peut avoir sur une paire de gants blancs!...



A DUSTY WAY

By Edward J. O'Brien

I SHALL come back this road some day
And wonder that twenty years of rain
Have not worn the ruts that the rumbling wain
Travelled that ancient noon of May.

But perhaps it will not be just the same,
And the dust that crumbled beneath my tread
Was only the dust of a dream that had fled,
And the blackbird's song a vanishing flame.

A FORECAST OF THE THEATRICAL SEASON

By George Jean Nathan

THE various announcements of the theatrical managers setting forth their plans for the coming season reveal, as usual, little more than the mere names of the plays scheduled for production, the names of the authors and the names of the players who will have the leading parts. Since these *affiches* are accordingly about as illuminating as so many damp matches, I take it upon myself to forecast the managers' enterprises somewhat more explicitly. That the coming months will establish the almost uncanny accuracy of my prophecies, I am, though by nature ever a charmingly modest fellow, perfectly certain.

Thus, for example, I announce with confidence that no less than four managers will during the coming season produce no less than four plays the stereotyped theatricality of portions of which the several authors will attempt to disguise by causing one character to observe to another that the situation immediately concerned is just like a similar stale situation on the stage. In the course of these plays, when the leading woman confesses her lewd passion for the person of the leading man, she will circumspectly kiss the object of her overpowering lust an inch or so to the right of the conventional mouth, thus conveying to the audience that in private life she is really a lady, and strictly virtuous.

Figuring with considerable perspicacity that the war will cause a number of deaths among our soldiers and that as a consequence many homes will be grief-stricken, at least three managers will pursue the bacon with plays setting

forth the comforting theory that the dead never die. This assuaging philosophy will, in general, be doubtless expounded through the agency of some juvenile Peter Grimm in the uniform of a second lieutenant who will materialize from behind portières, sideboards, upright pianos, dinner tables whose cloths conveniently reach to the floor, and big armchairs facing up-stage, every time the actress playing the role of the heart-broken mother mentions the deceased's name. In the event of there being no capable male actor available, one or more of the managers will probably make a woman's part out of the star role and so transmute the deceased second lieutenant into a mother who has been sanctified by a bad case of diabetes or something and who opportunely returns in a mauve light on such occasions as her wayward son is on the point of robbing the bank, murdering his uncle Pedro, or reading the *New Republic*.

Other managers, figuring that there will be altogether too many war plays, will decide that what the public wants in time of war are plays that have absolutely nothing to do with war. These managers will consequently put on a grand total of at least ten intrinsically very tiresome plays the contemporaneous box-office virtue of which they will imagine rests in the circumstance that the action of the plays passes in a peaceful little village and concerns the simple amours of a coterie of aplanatic yokels.

Of war melodramas, there will probably be at least a dozen in which the leading actor will be called upon to play a dual role. This latter will generally

take the form of a trusted captain in the Allied Army on the one side, and of his evil twin brother, a German spy, on the other. At one point in the play, the manuscript will call for the simultaneous appearance upon the stage of both characters. This will be cleverly negotiated by darkening the stage for no intelligible reason and bringing on a second actor who will laboriously seek to hide from the audience his utter dissimilarity to the leading actor by wearing his overcoat collar turned up to his chin, by pulling his cap down over his eyes, and by facing up stage with his back to the audience and conducting the dialogue with his pseudo-double over his shoulder.

The scarcity of foreign plays will cause several managers to buy the rights to fifteen-minute vaudeville sketches containing one good moment apiece, which one good moment the managers will in each instance persuade the authors to expand into a three-act play to run two and one-half hours. When, subsequently, the public will fail to patronize these plays, the managers in question will in Sunday newspaper interviews blame the bad business on the police order dimming the lights in front of the theaters, on the prevailing mood of depression brought on by the war, on the increased high cost of living, on the increase of personal taxes, and on the fear of hostile airplane raids.

The large financial success of the so-called morality play, "Experience," will prompt several managers to believe that there must be a pot of money in any play in which the leading character, instead of being named Lady Audley, is rechristened Avarice and in which Luke Marks is called Despair and George Talboys Retribution. Accordingly, we shall have a number of plays in which the familiar old stock drop-curtain "in one" representing the public square will be set down on the program as depicting "The Meeting Place of the Thousand and One Temptations" and in which the old stock green-walled and red-portièred interior will be listed as "The House Where Innocence Is Be-

guiled." These plays will be warmly endorsed by a number of prominent clergymen, a class of gentlemen who may always be hocus-pocused into praising theatrical exhibitions wherein a scene intrinsically pretty warm is given the surface aspect of a chaste sermon by shrewdly changing Sapho's name to Wickedness and her lover's to Purity, and alluding to the staircase leading to the boudoir as "The Sinister Stairs of Inexperience."

There will be produced a musical comedy in some song of which the lyric writer will negotiate some such perfectly simple rhyming as "pray, may Pa say" with "très dégagé." This will cause great excitement among the reviewers who will enthusiastically compare the lyric writer with W. S. Gilbert.

Deducing from the stage success of Booth Tarkington's "Seventeen" that the theater is in for a "cycle" of plays dealing with youngsters, and appreciating that, since child actors get very small salaries, such plays may be produced with small outlay, several managers will put on similar pieces and will hire to play the leading role of the tough street urchin some prim, blond, soprano-tongued little Fauntleroy who has studied elocution under Prof. Hugo L. Piffel and who made a hit a couple of seasons ago as one of the angels in "The Bluebird."

One or two of the younger producers, intrigued by the notion of æsthetic and cultural kudos, will put on one or more of the entirely admirable but presently excessively tiresome classics and will be lavishly praised for their high ideals, which will provide one or more evenings of very irksome theatergoing, by most of the critics, including myself.

Several melodramas and big musical revues will vouchsafe as their leading feature some such spectacular mechanical device as "The Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava." This device, all rights fully protected under the patent laws, will, by the employment of a treadmill, 2 real horses mounted by live men in British uniforms and 598

papier-maché horses mounted by stuffed dummies dressed in similar uniforms, project a remarkably realistic illusion of a treadmill, 2 real horses mounted by live men in British uniforms and 598 papier-maché horses mounted by stuffed dummies dressed in similar uniforms.

There will be the customary number of derivatives from "Pollyanna" in which cripples suffering from agonizing deformities which surgery has pronounced incurable will suddenly find themselves miraculously healed as a result of protracted quotation of the writings of Dr. Frank Crane.

Fully two dozen Red Cross nurses will bend over hospital cots in the second acts of as many plays, slowly draw back the sheets, and discover that the wounded soldier is their own husband with whom they foolishly quarreled and from whom they separated six months before.

The shortage of dramatic manuscripts will be instrumental in causing a number of producers to import French plays the theme of which centers upon an overt act of adultery. The producers will turn these plays over to their trained corps of adaptors who will make the plays ready for the American stage by leaving the manuscripts intact save for the mere changing of the overt act of adultery into the stealing of a valuable pearl necklace. The subsequent failure of the plays to interest American audiences, the producers and reviewers will attribute to the irreconcilable difference in viewpoint of Continental and American audiences.

There will be dramatized approximately twenty-five *Saturday Evening Post* stories rehearsing how Roger C. Blakewell, Jr., devises an ingenious scheme to make \$500,000 in a week's time, how Roger presently discovers that his success will spell unhappiness for Cholmondely Kraus, the old inventor, whose daughter Bermuda he has come to love, and how Roger then wistfully abandons the project.

Some ambitious actor or actress will with a flourish inaugurate a repertoire

company, will produce in succession Ibsen's "When We Dead Awaken," a play written by Henry Arthur Jones twenty years ago and a new play of American life by Miss Gladys Mae Gastmeyer, of Leonardville, New Jersey, will then conclude that there is no place in New York for a repertoire theater, and will give up the enterprise.

A very smart flavour will be imparted to a minimum of three plays through the mention, by name, of the Union Club, the Rolls-Royce motor car and Pol Roger Reserve 1904, and through the presence of a lighted alcohol cigarette burner on the grand piano, the outfitting of the butler in a footman's uniform, and the serving of cocktails in the drawing-room.

M. Jacques Copeau will produce a modern French play at the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier in strict accordance with his theory that scenery should ever be reduced to the simplest terms possible that it may interpose not the slightest distracting note. In pursuance of this theory, he will therefore suggest an "interior" which will completely escape the audience's attention through the mere employment of several unostentatious green, purple and Alice blue portières, two pots of daisies, four palms, three jars of Easter lilies, several boxes of geranium, two austere simple tall red and gold floor lamps, several mere gilt chairs, a small wooden platform three feet in height placed in the centre of the stage and tastily covered with Turkish rugs, a column to either side of the proscenium arch wound with black and white cheesecloth and decorated with sprigs of wisteria, an inexpensive bracket lamp or two shaded, very simply, with pink cambric, and by the further clever employment for the characters' exits and entrances of two small doors cut into the left and right walls of the theater directly beneath the stage boxes.

In a number of plays, German-Americans who are still loyal to the Kaiser will invent deadly aeroplanes that will work under water, will contrive to get the invention into the hands of the Ber-

lin military agents, will presently learn that their own sons, fighting with the American naval forces, have been killed by the invention, and will then furiously throw the household spittoon through the picture of the Kaiser hanging on the wall.

Five farces will very suggestively work up to a risqué scene in a bedroom and will then employ the bed (which has been staring the expectant audience in the face for three-quarters of an hour and which has periodically and with much elaborate eye-winking been prepared for the night by Pipkins, the bachelor's suave man) solely as a seat for the fat comedian when he uses the telephone.

There will be produced at least one play in which a gruff, iron-willed, obdurate character will be promptly metamorphosed into a veritable sugar lump after having fallen to sleep on the couch near the fireplace and dreamed a dream. This dream will be interpreted to the audience either in terms of a couple of peroxide stage children romping hand-in-hand around the couch in a spotlight, or in terms of transparent gauze wall above the mantel-piece through which the dreaming character's late lamented wife or deceased mother may be observed seated under a tree laden with pink blossoms, smiling sadly.

I shall be invited to review the performance of the eminent Mrs. Fiske in a new play and, the seat assigned me being fully three rows removed from the stage, will be unable to decipher anything the lady says. Being possessed of an *outré* idiosyncrasy that takes the form of failing to comprehend how an actress who is unable intelligibly to speak her native language may at the same time be her nation's foremost actress, I shall express the disquietude in print. Shortly afterward, the frankly anonymous letters and the others postmarked from Grand Street and signed Van Rensselaer Schermerhorn or Belmont Sloane will begin to come in. These letters will accuse me of crooked prejudice born of the fact (1) that I doubtless once tried unsuccessful-

fully to sell Mrs. Fiske a play; (2) that I was doubtless once married or something to an actress in Mrs. Fiske's company whom Mrs. Fiske compelled to wear a green and maroon dress and whose virtuosity was thus completely and foully spiked; (3) that Mrs. Fiske's husband, Mr. Harrison Grey Fiske (whom I know and like) once bought me a cocktail and that by thus writing an adverse opinion of his wife I am simply trying to show off my great independence and imperviousness to bribe; and (4) that since any number of persons believe Mrs. Fiske is a great artiste, I am taking the shortest cut to notoriety by the obvious tactic of expressing an opinion opposite to that of the majority.

The current interest in spiritualism, and the popularity and big sale of the innumerable brochures written on the subject, will inspire one of the more intellectual managers to go after the money with the kind of pro-spiritist play in which Little Nell, the orphan, dies on a darkened stage, in which her body is thereupon illuminated with a baby spotlight and hoisted a couple of feet above the sofa by half a dozen wires strung across pulleys and connected by ropes with a windlass stationed in the wings, and in which the actor who plays the part of the doctor then reverently bows his head, turns to the actor who plays the part of the skeptic, and says, "Now can you longer doubt!"

There will be produced a play by a pale imitator of Bernard Shaw who will insert into his pale imitation a dozen or so sympathetic hokums of the popular stage. The critics will wax hugely enthusiastic over the opus and, enkindled by the boob-warming hokums, will thereupon write that the play is better than Shaw because its characters are more human.

At least two very bad three-hour plays will be produced by managers who will imagine the plays will nonetheless prove extraordinarily popular because of their three-minute trick endings in which the explanation is vouchsafed that what has gone before was the

result of the leading character's having eaten five steaks à la Tartare, three Yorkshire bucks and seven Bismarck herring before going to bed.

Four star actors and actresses who in the preliminary rehearsals have exercised the precaution to weed out from their support all the good actors and actresses and the further precaution to dispose the substitutes upon the stage in such wise that they shall be constantly half hidden from the view of the audience, will be celebrated by the gentlemen of the press as strong personalities who always dominate whatever play they happen to appear in.

One of the stellar diversions of the season, as of the antecedent seasons, will be the discharging of critical black looks at the commercial managers by the uncommercial critics of the newspapers who altruistically sacrifice the pursuit of mere money that they may devote themselves and their lives wholeheartedly to the art of writing about "Oh Look," "Some Baby," "Toot Toot," "Go To It," "Love o' Mike" and "Throwing the Bull."

The motion picture "news weeklies" will bring the important news of the day vividly to the screen and thus, on the very day of the event's occurrence, show the public the Northampton, Mass., school-teachers playing basket ball during the lunch hour.

A number of musical revues will offer what the programs will describe as satires on current people and events. These keen satires will consist in the main of (1) an actor in a sombrero and pair of tortoise-shell spectacles who will step to the footlights, grin and exclaim "Dee-lighted," and (2) an actor wearing a placard on which is printed the name Henry and pulling after him on a string a small wheelbarrow which, when turned around, will disclose painted on its back the word Ford.

The Drama League Playgoing Committees will impassionedly endorse all the plays written by Björnson, Bataille, Charles Rann Kennedy and Augustus Thomas, and the members will therefore attend Fred Stone in a body.

II

IN a uniformly entertaining, if uniformly inaccurate, lecture before the students of Barnard College, Professor Brander Matthews not long ago brewed the following up-to-the-minute philosophies:

"Just as grammar has its conventions," said the Professor, "so the drama, too, has its conventions. In Japanese tragedy each performer has a (supposedly) invisible attendant clad in black. They hand a fan, lift a cloak—and by the middle of the play you do not see them. The Mexicans always have the devil dressed in a United States Cavalry officer's uniform. Is this any more peculiar than, as I have seen in Irving's production, buildings coming down from the sky and settle down on the stage for a change of scene during an act? Certain conventions are necessary, but some are non-essential, and these the new scenery is trying to do away with. There are conventions also of costume—it took Sir Walter Scott to remove the tall ostrich plumes from Kemble, playing Macbeth, and replace them with a single plume. But there are some inescapable conventions. You always expect to leave the theater in two hours and a half. Playwrights, therefore, always condense. The characters say just the right things in the right order, which is absolutely untrue to life. Moreover, every character always understands everything the first time it is said! The convention of condensation leads to that of wit, where everyone is as witty as the author. Take the convention of Shakespeare, where every character speaks blank verse. This would not be so in life!

Let us present the Professor with an examination paper on these conventions of the drama.

First Professorial Convention: "In Japanese tragedy, each performer has a (supposedly) invisible attendant clad in black. They hand a fan, lift a cloak—and by the middle of the play you do not see them."

Question: Is it true, or is it not true, that the Japanese stage has to a large extent sometime since abandoned this convention?

Answer, contained in a small gelatine capsule to be slipped to the Professor when no one is looking: It is true.

Second Professorial Convention:

"The Mexicans always have the devil dressed in a United States Cavalry officer's uniform."

Question: Name more than one or two plays in which the Mexicans have presented the devil in such guise.

Answer, hidden in the small tin aperture under the rubber at the tip of a lead-pencil and edged on the sly into the Professor's hands: The circumstance that the Mexicans have once, or twice—or even three times—presented the devil as a United States Cavalry officer makes the dido a convention of the Mexican stage no more than the circumstance that the Americans have once, or twice—or even three times—presented the Italian as a white-slaver makes it a convention of the American stage that Italians must always be presented as white-slavers.

Third Professorial Convention: "Is this any more peculiar than, as I have seen in Irving's production, buildings coming down from the sky and settle down on the stage for a change of scene during the act? Certain conventions are necessary, and some are non-essential, and these the new scenery is trying to do away with."

Question: See above.

Answer, written on a piece of cigarette rice-paper, stuck into the toe of the shoe with a small pin and covertly conveyed to the Professor by passing the foot beneath the Professor's desk: The visible descent of scenery from the flies was due to no scenic convention, but merely to bad lighting arrangements. The new scenery is often lowered into place from the flies just as was the old scenery.

Fourth Professorial Convention: "There are conventions also of costume—it took Sir Walter Scott to remove the tall ostrich plumes from Kemble, playing Macbeth, and replace them with a single plume."

Question: Was it a convention always to play Macbeth with tall ostrich plumes or was not this merely an idiosyncrasy of Kemble?

Answer, written on the back of the cuff and brought within the Professor's range of vision by shooting the cuff, pretending to blow the nose and thus holding the cuff aloft that it may be perused: It was no more a convention to play Macbeth with tall ostrich plumes in Kemble's time, simple because Kemble so played Macbeth, than it is a convention to play Macbeth with a St. Louis round haircut in James K. Hackett's current time, simply because James K. Hackett so plays Macbeth.

Fifth Professorial Convention: "But there are always some inescapable conventions. You always expect to leave the theater in two hours and a half. Playwrights, therefore, always condense. The characters say just the right things in the right order, which is absolutely untrue to life."

Question: Is this absolutely untrue to life?

Answer, conveyed to the Professor by casually holding up a copy of the Police Gazette and signalling behind it in the sign language: No, this is not absolutely untrue to life. For example, many conversations in actual life between (1) two diplomatists, (2) a good newspaper reporter and, say, a sharp politician or lawyer, (3) the hostess and her guests at a formal dinner, (4) a military officer and his aide. Or a conversation on a definite subject—as in dramatic dialogue—between some such actual persons as, say, Frank Harris and Shaw, or Huneke and Richard Strauss, or even Browning and King. The notion that conversations in actual life are invariably full of stutterings, evasions, you-don't-means, hem's and er's is of a piece with the notion, held by the same theorists, that an expensive cigar is always stronger than a cheap one and that an intelligent prize-fighter is more likely to win a ring battle than a first-rate bonehead. Further, equally erroneous is the theory that in drama the characters always say just the right things in the right order. More often, of course, are they made by the play-

wright arbitrarily to say just the wrong things in the right order that the consequent befuddlement may institute and prolong the misunderstandings, et cetera, essential to the dramatic action. Examples are at once obvious and plentiful, and range all the way from Hauptmann's "Before Sunrise" to Richard Harding Davis' "The Galloper." If the Professor refers to the direct and consistently relevant dialogue of a play in its relation to the telling of a single and definite dramatic story, he is equally in error when he observes it to be in striking opposition to actuality. What play written in recent years has developed a story more directly than was developed in actual life the story, say, of the recent Grace Lusk murder case? To argue that the story of this case, if turned to the purposes of the stage, would nevertheless be boiled down and reduced to two and one-half hours is to argue that one may read Arnold Bennett's Clayhanger series in two and one-half hours if one only skips the "descriptions."

Sixth Professorial Convention: "Moreover, every character always understands everything the first time it is said!"

Question: Is this even half-way true?

Answer, written on brown butcher paper, wrapped around a Cinco puritano and thus passed to the Professor without arousing suspicion: No.

Supplementary answer, slipped to the Professor in the same manner: If by "understand" you mean "thoroughly comprehend," there are contradictory instances to be found in hundreds of plays. A few examples: "The Poor Little Rich Girl," Schnitzler's "The Hour of Recognition," Pérez-Galdós' "Duchess of San Quentin," Sutro's "The Two Virtues," Mitchell's "The New York Idea," etc. If, on the other hand, by "understand" you mean merely that the ear of this character always catches what that character says the first time he says it—a more likely interpretation—there are contradictory in-

stances also to be found in hundreds of plays. A few examples: "Grumpy," "The Professor's Love Story," "The Gay Lord Quex," "Letty," etc.

Seventh Professorial Convention: "The convention of condensation leads to that of wit, where everyone is as witty as the author."

Question: Is this even one-third true?

Answer, written on a small slip of paper and fastened with a press of the thumb to a wad of chewing-gum freshly removed from the mouth and still warm, the wad being then deftly projected to the side of the Professor's desk whereto, since it is still soft and moist, it will adhere: No. The author more often makes all of his characters, save one, dolts or semi-dolts, that his wit, placed in the mouth of the one character, may appear by contrast to be of an exceptional quality. A few examples: Chesterton and the character of the Stranger in "Magic," Shaw and the character of Tanner in "Man and Superman," Bahr and the character of Esch in "Principle," Schnitzler and the character of Bernhardt in "Professor Bernhardt," Wedekind and the character of Hetmann in "Hidalla," Capus and the character of Mme. Joulin in "The Two Schools," Tchekov and the character of Trigorin in "The Seagull," etc.

Eighth Professorial Convention: "Take the convention of Shakespeare, where every character speaks blank verse. This would not be so in life!"

Well, credit where credit is due. Let us admit that here the distinguished Professor negotiates a real torpedo! For five solid minutes I have tried to think of someone who in actual life speaks always in blank verse, and, by all the gods, I confess it freely, I'm stuck! But perhaps only temporarily. Something tells me, has long told me—that is to say, I have a suspicion—indeed more than a suspicion, a definite feeling—that the Professor himself . . .

RATTLING THE SUBCONSCIOUS

By H. L. Mencken

I

HARD upon the heels of the initiative and referendum, the Gary system, paper-bag cookery, the Montessori method, *vers libre* and the music of Igor Feodorovitch Stravinsky, psychoanalysis now comes to intrigue and harass the sedentary multipara who seeks refuge in the women's clubs from the horrible joys of home life. The thing is much more dangerous to toy with than its forerunners in Advanced Thought, and at the same time much more fascinating—dangerous because it turns the uplift inward and may lead to sudden embarrassments, and fascinating because those embarrassments have to do with the forbidden subject of sex, the one permanent interest of all who go in skirts. Already it becomes impossible for a fashionable doctor to hold his trade without setting up a psychoanalytical laboratory behind his tile-and-nickel surgery, with a rose-tinted bunch-light to tone down his bald head, and zinc etchings of Pasteur, Metchnikoff and the Mona Lisa on the walls. Appendectomy and tonsillectomy go out of vogue, along with Bulgarian bacilli and Rabindranath Tagore. Let the correct *médecin* mention a gall-stone or an adenoid, and he appears as archaic as if he mentioned boneset tea or phlebotomy. Even nervous prostration seems to be in decay, at least under its old name. In place of all such *déclassé* whimsies of the gods the truly solvent patient now suffers from a complex complex of complexes, the mildest of which causes her to imagine that she has asthma or that there are burglars in the house, and the more gaudy of

which make her dream that her husband has been poisoned by a Hindu swami or that she has been carried into captivity by a moving-picture actor eight feet high and with eyes as shining as the headlights of an automobile.

Such is the new complex complex. Such is psychoanalysis, the youngest of the arts and sciences. One snickers at it as in duty bound. It passes through the stage of buncombe, ill comprehended, infested by quacks, still a bit wobbly and uncertain. The flavor of sex in it lifts the snicker to a guffaw, for whatever is sexual, to us of English speech, belongs to humor: we evade the infernal mystery by making a joke of it. But the further I proceed through the fat tomes of the psychoanalysts the more I am convinced that, in E. W. Howe's favorite phrase, there must be something in it. The early announcements of Prof. Dr. Sigmund Freud, the founder, had an appearance of extravagance, and a critical examination of them showed that, in point of fact, some of them *were* extravagant, but the more his fundamental ideas have been put to the test the more plain it has become that they are essentially sound. As developed and modified by Adler of Vienna, by Jung of Zurich, by Ferenczi of Budapest, by Bjerre of Copenhagen, by Brill of New York, by Jones of London and by scores of other widely dispersed investigators, they have come to such a stage that both their truth and their utility begin to be manifest. On the one hand they blow away the accumulated psychological rubbish of centuries, both "scientific" and popular, and on the other hand they set up a new psychology that meets the known

facts exactly, and interprets them logically, and diligently avoids all the transcendental pishposh of the past. The process of thought, under this new dispensation, becomes thoroughly intelligible for the first time. It responds to causation; it is finally stripped of supernaturalism; it is seen to be determined by the same natural laws that govern all other phenomena in space and time. And so seen, it gives us a new understanding of the forces which move us in the world, and shows us the true genesis and character of our ideas, and enormously strengthens our grip upon reality.

Freud's dependence upon the concept of the subconscious has exposed his whole system to misinterpretation, for the subconscious is a favorite stage property of psychical researchers, mental healers, East Indian "philosophers" and other such mountebanks, and has thus fallen under the suspicion of the judicious. Nevertheless, the thing exists. You are trying to remember, say, a man's name or a street address, and for the life of you you can't call it up. After half an hour you give over the effort, and go about your business. Then, of a sudden, it bobs up in your memory. Where has it been meanwhile? Was it actually forgotten, as you concluded? If so, how could it reappear? Nay, brother, it was not forgotten: it was merely buried temporarily in the sub-cellars of your subconscious, which is simply another name for that part of your memory which is unconscious. You remembered all the while, but for the time you didn't know that you remembered.

Well, it is Freud's notion that this subconscious of yours is full of such obliterated memories—that it is a sort of cold-storage warehouse for all the things that you have thought in the past and then put out of mind. Some, perhaps, have quite died; you have genuinely forgotten them. But the majority live on in a state of suspended animation. A new thought or experience may suddenly revive them; they appear

without apparent reason and surprise you. And even when they don't appear clearly—that is, even when you are not plainly conscious of them—they are still there, and their influence shows itself, often mysteriously, in what you *are* conscious of—in the strange ideas that flit through your mind, in the fears and prejudices that lurk there, in the fantastic dreams that you dream, in your ravings when you are delirious or drunk, in the whole contents of your mental baggage. And the more you try to hold down the lid—the more you try to convert the unpleasantly remembered into the comfortably forgotten—the more these quasi-corpses pick at their grave-clothes, and poke their heads out of their tomb, and whisper into your inner ear, and fill you with disquiet.

The fact that a good many such throttled memories must be sexual in character is so obvious that it scarcely needs statement. Under our Christian civilization the sexual impulse is constantly under suppression. Our whole culture, in fact, is largely a conspiracy against it. Not only is it opposed outwardly by a host of social taboos, most of them in conflict with nature; it is also opposed inwardly by powerful concepts of morals and decorum. No human being, in the department of sex, is absolutely unmoral, not even a Broadway actor or a Greenwich village poetess. The worst of us hesitate, at least at times. And the best of us, giving "best" its moral significance, hesitate so habitually and with such determination that in the end the very impulse of sex seems to be extinguished, and the individual ceases, obviously in act and apparently in thought, to be a mammal. But only apparently! Here is where Freud and his friends have got farthest with their revelation. On the surface all is quiet, but down in the depths a war goes on, with nature on one side and rectitude on the other, and that war casts its uncomprehended flames and uproars through the whole consciousness, and influences the whole process of thought, and leaves its influ-

ence upon every idea, and every emotion and every dream.

This, indeed, is the crux of the matter: that ideas are determined, not alone by conscious causation, but even more importantly by unconscious causation—that the mental life of every one of us is partly the logical product of our environment, and partly a reaction from the natural desires which that environment opposes. Some of the most powerful of those opposed desires, particularly when they seem to be most thoroughly obliterated, are of a sexual character: it is not indulgence that makes that lion most exigent, but self-control. But, as Adler and Jung have showed, there are other desires in us that are powerful too, and their suppression leads to similar inflammations. For example, there is the strong yearning that Schopenhauer called the will-to-live and Nietzsche the will-to-power. It is the impulse behind all our egoistic dreams, all our secret hopes and aspirations, all our reaching out for envy, respect, consideration. But like the primary impulse of sex it is opposed implacably by the discipline that is civilization; we must all learn to renounce, to take half a loaf, to practice a certain humility. Moreover, there is something worse here: we must all learn to face the fact that we are by no means the lordly creatures that we'd like to be—that other men, in this way or that, are actually better—that even the most modest ambition is impossible of full attainment.

Out of this depressing realization arises what the psychoanalysts call the inferiority complex. The idea itself, being highly unpalatable, is put out of mind, and we try to forget it. But it lingers on in the sub-conscious, diligently producing toxins to flood the consciousness upstairs, and the result, on the one hand, is many a bad case of worry, many a curious delusion, many an attack of neurasthenia, and on the other hand many a high faith and resolution. The psychoanalysts still devote too much time to the former department. Their main energies are yet con-

centrated upon studying individual patients; they try to find out why Miss — has succumbed to nervous prostration, and Mr. — has suddenly forgotten how to multiply 3,654 by 1,875, and Mrs. — has such terrifying dreams. But their progress hereafter must be from the particular to the general. They must begin to prod into wider and more normal ideas—for example, the idea of Puritanism, the idea at the bottom of such irrational beliefs as that in ghosts, the idea of uplifting, the idea that the arts are immoral, all the flatulent and imperishable ideas that afflict the human race. Here is their great chance. Here they may create an entirely new science of psychology, and take the study of mind away from the absurd college professors who now make it ridiculous, and so help man to understand himself.

As I have said, the tomes of these inquirers are very bulky. Jung's "Analytical Psychology," translated by Constance Long; his "Psychology of the Unconscious," translated by Beatrice Hinkle; Adler's "The Neurotic Constitution," translated by Glueck and Lind, and Hitschmann's capital exposition of "Freud's Theories of the Neuroses," translated by C. R. Payne (all *Moffat-Yard*), are tall, stately volumes; H. W. Frink's "Morbid Fears and Compulsions" (*Moffat-Yard*) is nearly three inches thick and weighs two-and-a-half pounds. But there is nothing dull in these books; you will surely not fall asleep over them. Nor over Freud's "Totem and Taboo," translated by A. A. Brill, nor over his "Leonardo Da Vinci" (both *Moffat-Yard*), nor over Bjerre's "The History and Practise of Psychoanalysis," nor over Ferenczi's "Contributions to Psychoanalysis" (both *Badger*). Here, indeed, is a literature of singular interest. There is in it all the horror of theology and all the fascination of fiction.

II

MR. AND MRS. WILSON FOLLETT open their book on "Some Modern Novelists" (*Holt*) with blushful apologies.

This is really no time, they say, to be lingering over the flesh-pots of the bozart. There is, indeed, something subtly indecent about a man "trying irresponsibly to enjoy the fine fruits of his heritage of race, language, and tradition, just when the whole tree that bore those fruits is all but uprooted." A lofty sentiment, but after all a mere sentiment—in fine, empty cant, a notion as hollow as a jug. On the one hand, it vastly overestimates the effects of war, and particularly of modern war, upon the general flow of human progress, and on the other hand it overlooks the elemental fact that the chief aim of art is to afford us a means of escape from life, and that such an escape is never more desirable than when life is most hazardous and unpleasant. This thirst for comforting illusion is actually carried over into war itself. The human mind gropes instinctively for romance and beauty in the harshest business imaginable. War is made lyrical, ecstatic, transcendental; its aims become messianic; its very methods take on a lovely glamour. And when some Henri Barbusse, or Bernhardt, or Lieut. Latzko comes along and describes it realistically, he is either denounced out of hand as a scoundrel, or read furtively and with a sense of sin, as schoolgirls read "Three Weeks" and Ibsen.

Nor is there the slightest sign that the present war, vast as it is, will "uproot" anyone's "heritage of race, language and tradition"; on the contrary, it will probably greatly augment the value of that heritage to all men. Nor will its gigantic distraction, its despotic flooding of the mind, paralyze all æsthetic feeling and effort, save perhaps temporarily; on the contrary, the rebound from it will stimulate all the arts and make men turn to them as never before, for their chief use, as I have said, is to rescue all of us from the unbearable contemplation of an intolerable world. Poetry is not the pursuit of truth; poetry is the emotional evasion of truth. Its practise is a form of benign idiocy—sometimes sublime,

often very caressing, but always anti-fact, illusion-born. So with music. It is an attempt to organize what in nature is chaotic. Its fundamental achievement is orderly rhythm, and the thirst for that rhythm, among persons beset endlessly by the strident and disorderly aural sensations of civilization, often amounts to a downright frenzy, as the success of our American popular music shows. I spent the third day of last July composing an article for these refined pages. My neighbors are fecund and patriotic; their children, in anticipation of the national holiday, devoted the day to setting off fire-crackers. The din, after a while, stopped my work, and I fell to wandering about the house. In a few moments I found myself at the piano, laboriously performing a Mozart sonata. Why? I hadn't touched that piano for ten days. Especially, why Mozart? I hadn't so much as glanced at his sonatas for three months. The problem puzzled me, but soon the solution became clear enough. My sudden desire for music was a quite natural reaction from the unorganized noises around me. I sought a typical escape in the arts from the harshness of reality. And my unconscious choice of Mozart was as sound as unconscious choices always are, for it is in Mozart that music is most perfect and crystal-clear, and so most superior to the abominable cacophony of the actual world. It is by precisely the same process, though usually less obviously, that all of us are led to the arts. The man who uses them and esteems them most, the man of noticeably æsthetic inclinations, is simply the man who is most out of conceit with the life of his race and time. It is not without reason that the artist, at all times and everywhere, has been regarded as malcontent and anti-social by the average respectable citizen. And it is not without reason that the respectable citizen, placidly content with the existing order, has been regarded as a numskull by the artist.

That war petrifies the concrete artist is a notion as false as the notion that

it paralyzes the arts. It may interrupt, true enough, his expression; it may even destroy him. But if he gets out alive he gets out with his withers unwrung, and his rebellion against reality anything but diminished. The United States, since 1776, has produced three artists of the first consideration in the department of letters: Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman and Samuel L. Clemens. Poe died in 1849, but both Whitman and Clemens lived through the colossal upheaval of the Civil War. That war tore up the United States infinitely more than the present war will tear it up, and both men saw the business at close hand, and, as citizens, were profoundly affected by it. Yet its net effect upon them, as artists, was almost nil. If Whitman was influenced at all, it was to his advantage: his experience made a better poet of him, a more resolute artist. As for Clemens, I defy any one to show that those four years of ferocious strife influenced him so much as any ordinary man would be influenced by going bankrupt, or learning Greek, or marrying a red-haired wife. And don't, mon chair, forget Ludwig van Beethoven! The infernal uproar of the Napoleonic wars, raging in his very dooryard, menacing him personally, left him absolutely unmoved as an artist. Even in the C minor symphony there is no more actual war than in Schubert's C major. He dedicated it to Bonaparte as an afterthought, and then launched it *against* Bonaparte as a second afterthought. And all the while, with armies marching upon Vienna and cannon thundering in the suburbs, Schubert was diligently cramming thoroughbass at the Convikt under Ruzicka, and preparing himself to write the most ravishing tunes in the world—and all of them as bare of war and the frenzies and neuroses of war as so many hymns by a choir of nuns.

I expose this sentimentality *inter arma* of Dr. Follett at such length because it crops up on all sides just now, and because it sends echoes through the whole of his book. That book has very noticeable merits. It shows an inde-

pendent thinking out of many of the current problems of literary criticism. It avoids the more idiotic blather of the campus-pump critics, though it yields senselessly to their mania for pigeon-holing. It is discreet in its selections. It presents very acute studies of several novelists, and especially of Arnold Bennett, Henry James and Joseph Conrad. It is urbane in manner. It is well-written. But in it, from end to end, there appears a critic who, with the best intentions in the world, is not yet fully emancipated from the puerile doctrines of the class-room, manufactured for the half-mature by the half-intelligent—a critic who, in the midst of his æsthetic valuations, falls back constantly upon extrinsic and irrelevant values—in particular, upon moral values, notions of what is nice, the criteria of the pedagogic snuffler. The weakness, in the case of Thomas Hardy, leads him to absurdity. In the case of Dreiser, it leads him almost to imbecility. It leaves a blemish upon an otherwise penetrating and instructive book. Let us repair to our respective houses of worship and make petition to God that it does not lie upon the author's next one. Of the young critics that emerge from the ether of the schools, this Follett (I assume, following the legal maxim, that what his wife does in his presence she does by his order) is the most attractive. He has a future ahead of him, if only he manages to forget that the first aim of a novel worth reading is not to teach something, but to interpret something—that its worth lies, not in the sweetness of its doctrine, but in the brilliance with which that doctrine is applied.

Francis Hackett, in "Horizons" (*Huebsch*), avoids that error, and, on the whole, makes a much better book. It lacks the coherence and soberness of Follett's; it is, indeed, a mere gathering up of discrete papers, with no design and scarcely any structure of formal theory. Nevertheless, it is impossible to read 386 pages of any man without coming to some notion, more or less sound, of his fundamental notions, and

what one finds in Hackett is a sort of empirical radicalism that is the opposite of Follett's suspicion of heterodoxy. He is, in brief, a fellow who likes to hear ideas, and is disposed to allow a lot to them if they be stated by interesting men. Add to this a sharp eye for the more ancient varieties of buncombe and a capacity for disposing of it with great effect, and you have the makings of a book-reviewer surely worth reading—one, at least, who will tell you the news while it is still hot, and make it as charming as possible. He starts off his book with a savage *reductio ad absurdum* of a somewhat pathetic Christian Endeavor critic from Iowa, and he ends it with very kind words for Prof. Dr. Thorstein Veblen, who stands to Marx, Lassalle and the other timorous Socialists of yesterday almost as Richard Strauss stands to Haydn, or General Pershing to General William Booth. And in the middle he devotes a great deal of space to H. G. Wells and other such brilliant projectors of current rebellions and malaises, and has praises for Vachel Lindsay and Sherwood Anderson, and sniffs somewhat disdainfully at Edith Wharton and Rupert Brooke. In brief, the book of a critic who has safely purged himself of what he was taught in his high-school, and is wandering around experimentally, eager to sniff all the winds of doctrine, and in no hurry to settle down to a choice and a formula.

The fact is both the merit and the defect of the volume. It avoids all the usual laboring of theories, all the usual effort to bend everything to one slick and glittering scheme of things, but by the same token it presents a lot of gaps that cry out, so to speak, to be filled. One regrets inevitably that there is nothing about Conrad, with so much about Wells, Bennett and Samuel Butler, and one regrets, too, that Dreiser is left out, and Cabell, and George Moore, and some of the best-seller makers, and that the Iowa Hannah More is the only bircher of sophomores examined. Hackett on the other More, Paul Elmer, or on the Brownell whose

front name I forget, would be instructive, I do opine. But maybe these jobs are put off for Volume II. The files of the *New Republic*, I daresay, contain materials enough for a longish series; having no stomach for the uplift I have let my subscription run out, and so do not know. But I hear of a capital article on Richard Harding Davis, and of other meritorious compositions. The samples here presented have a very appetizing flavor. There is independent judgment in them, and some very effective phrases, and a nose for the interesting, and enough of prejudice to relieve them of judicial flaccidity. In brief, a sharply-marked personality is behind them, and that, after all, is the main thing in book-reviewing.

III

As if to deride Dr. Follett, there is an extraordinary number of critical works in the current crop of books. Dr. Ludwig Lewisohn offers a capital study of "The Poets of Modern France" (*Huebsch*), with some excellent specimen translations; Dr. Otto Heller, the author of the best book on Ibsen in English, turns to Maeterlinck, Strindberg, Nietzsche and Tolstoy in "Prophets of Dissent" (*Knopf*); Dr. George Raffalovich presents a translation of Emil Faguet's "En lisant Nietzsche," under the title of "On Reading Nietzsche" (*Moffat-Yard*); Dr. Maximilian A. Mügge boils down his long work on Nietzsche to 94 pages (*Dodge*); and Marshall Jones, the new Boston publisher, adds two more volumes to his useful series on architecture: "The Meaning of Architecture," by Irving K. Pond, and "Beyond Architecture," by A. Kingsley Porter.

As will be noted, the evangelist of the superman is to the front in these books; moreover, he appears in yet another volume in the Modern Library, to wit, with his "Beyond Good and Evil" (*Boni-Liveright*.) Dr. Mügge's little book, as all must guess who know his larger work, is an exact and illuminating piece of exposition—in brief, an

almost model interpretation. He knows Nietzsche thoroughly, he is familiar with the whole of the enormous Nietzsche literature, and he has a lucid style. Very few philosophers have ever been put so clearly into so few pages. The Faguet book, already well-known in the French, is far more subjective and free in form. It not only sets forth the Nietzschean system, as Faguet understands it; it also attempts to estimate the validity and human value of that system. The author rates the latter very highly. Old Friedrich's dialectical rampages, he says, shook all of us out of the complacency that periodically settles upon the world; he was right at bottom even when he was wrong in detail, and his snorting accomplished much good. In his discussion of specific ideas Faguet is sometimes less tolerant and less happy. His argument against the Nietzschean transvaluation of moral values, for example, is based upon the same error that More and other critics have fallen into—the error of assuming that Nietzsche proposed to overthrow the existing moral code altogether. Moreover, he shoots at a ghost when he proves so elaborately that mankind cannot be divided into masters and slaves—that there are many castes, and many codes. This platitude, you may be sure, did not escape Nietzsche himself. He was not in favor of a new regimentation. All he argued for was the deliverance of the upper castes of men, widely differing among themselves, from their joint bondage to the outworn ethical notions of the post-Exodus Jews.

Dr. Heller begins his chapter on Nietzsche with a labored and ineffective attempt to prove that the philosopher was anti-German, and hence not blamable for Prussianism in its current manifestations. Admitting the fact, what does it demonstrate? Absolutely nothing. On the one hand, it must be obvious that peoples do not take their ideas only from teachers who love and admire them, and on the other hand it must be equally obvious that

a teacher is not responsible for the deductions and practises of his pupils. If the latter assumption were sound then any Christian bishop would offer sound ground for approving the crucifixion of Christ. As for Nietzsche's dislike of Germans, it was surely no new phenomenon in Germany. Frederick the Great disliked them, and so did Bismarck, and yet no sane man would maintain that these men did not influence the German mind. The truth about Nietzsche is that his contemptuous reviling of all things German was precisely the thing that paved the way for his more positive ideas. The Germans, at first outraged by his tirade, finally began to see that he told the truth, and so they proceeded to overhaul their notions and to borrow from his ready-made store. He would dissent, I daresay, from some of the conclusions that they have finally come to, but so would Thomas Jefferson dissent from some of the conclusions that the people of the United States have come to. In the main, however, the Nietzschean influence is plain in latter-day German thinking, even in German mob-thinking; the wildest Rhine-town Socialist fortifies the ginger-pop of Marx with a hooch of Friedrich's cognac. What is more, the same phenomenon appears in other lands; if it is less visible it is largely because Nietzsche denounced other peoples less violently and devastatingly.

But I do not preach against Dr. Heller's book: I merely exhibit what seems to me to be one of its errors. In the main it is sound stuff—the work of a man who knows what he is about. Upon Dr. Lewisohn's discourse of the French poets I could write with better effect if my French were sounder. But even as it is, I can assure you that he accomplishes one aim of the translator unusually well: his translations, with few exceptions, are sonorous and graceful pieces of verse. None of the customary clumsiness is in them; they read like English poems, and they are of very good quality. And his critical discussion is sensible and instructive.

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